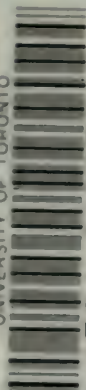


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WALSINGHAM,

THE GAMESTER.

BY CAPT. FREDERIC CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF

"LIFE OF A SAILOR," "BEN BRACE," &c.

—"I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die."

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WALSINGHAM;

OR,

THE RUINED GAMESTER.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the chilling winter of age checks the current of the blood,—when sickness and disease, distress and misery, cast a gloom over the valley of the shadow of death,—then it is that the mind looks back with horror on the black picture of its own degradation, and all the future is dark and dismal, without hope and without consolation. To those in the holy offices of religion how sedulously do the unhappy unburthen their minds, and how eagerly they solicit absolution ! Even in their confessions they feel the load lightened, and experience, when they have made another a confidant in their weakness, that they

have relieved themselves without adding to their neighbours' misfortunes. Thus the man deprived of parents, wife, and children,—the blighted branch on the blighted stem, sinking rapidly in the grave which yawns to receive him,—feels the consolation others have experienced as he proceeds to cleanse his foul bosom from the perilous stuff that runs within it.

It is true that mankind in general deceive themselves in the motives by which they are actuated; and perhaps even when they affirm that they are induced to publish their crimes, their exposures of a career of weakness and of vice, as much from a desire to serve as a beacon to others, (that, like the drunken Helot, they may repel, rather than attract,) as to unload the terrible weight that drags down their almost exhausted nature,—perhaps they may be impelled by a less noble motive, they may be induced to anatomize themselves from the want of some greater stimulant; for those who, until poverty forced them from the path, were familiar with the greatest of all excitements, may feel a momentary relief when the pen embodies their

thoughts, when they marshal their reflection on this ambiguous and distressing world, and when they retrace those stirring scenes, in which, notwithstanding their fallen and degraded state, they still in imagination seem to live, to move, and have their being. Happy indeed should he feel who finds that his example has been a warning to others, and that the records of crime have turned one man from that course which must inevitably end in poverty—must ruin the health and degrade the mind !

How far legislators are to blame, who by the plunder of the subject enrich the coffers of the state, is a point on which it is useless to insist ; but surely that government has little to pride itself upon, which can allow a monopoly of vice, and by the exorbitant price paid for permission to erect and open these sinks of iniquity, themselves almost legalize fraud—nay, urge the necessity of its practice in order that the proprietors may be enabled to clear a sufficiency to pay that government.

Honesty wavers when poverty assaults : the man of an avaricious cast of mind can never

view with indifference the piles of gold which glisten on the Spanish gambling-table, or look unmoved at the numerous *billets de banque* that are seen through the sliding boxes of the salon or Frascati's. In this country it is worse than either, because it is illegal to gamble, and yet it is sanctioned: the police are carefully excluded, the law has no eyes for the protection of the swindled, and when intoxication succeeds the first fury of continual losses, who can be answerable, or who can protect the unfortunate man from the pinching gripe of the professed gambler, the greedy and insatiable grasp of the practised swindler? We know the degradation of mind, the absolute ruin of health and property, which follows the path of those thus unhappily lured by their own proper protectors. The bridges which adorn the Seine are generally the last spot occupied by the living body of the gambler in France, and the Morgue shows the skeleton carcase of the plundered and the plunderer in all the horrid nakedness of deformity.

The lotteries in England for a time contri-

buted to demoralize the poorer classes; whilst the taste for dress, and the prospect of obtaining a chance to gratify it, made that class on whom our comforts depend in an equal ratio with their honesty, swerve from the path of virtue in order to obtain that which chance rendered it almost impossible to possess. Thus the government which sanctions gambling offers a premium upon dishonesty: but doubly culpable is that government which, pretending to wear the outward garb of sincerity, winks behind the false mask, and allows, yes publicly allows—what by *law* is prohibited. Look at the booths at a race: under the very eye of royalty must villany flourish, that villany being illegal. It is needless to carry this idea farther; indirectly we do what the French government does openly: both are to blame, both encourage dishonesty, both contribute to the ruin and demoralization of the subject.

Still is the infatuation so great, that although we know the chances which are against us—we know the sum the proprietors *must* win in order to carry on the establishment, yet we go with a

poor capital to fight against that which can command thousands—we stake our money against the fearful odds of superior capital and experienced dexterity.

When Robert Douglass had placed his last relative in the grave—had returned to his now solitary home, and gazed in silence round the desert of his occupation, he carefully counted the sum which remained his all in this world: he who had gone before had left nothing to increase the stock, and his whole fortune amounted to the immense sum of about three thousand pounds—a mere vegetation for life; and this was all that remained from the wreck of a much finer property.

For some time after his last relative's death, and his disappointments, Douglass led a retired life in a country village in England, the name of which we shall call Wilmington, and which was distant but a few miles from the metropolis. Of all monotonous lives, for a man who had travelled over nearly the whole world, that residence was the worst; the bickering scandal which is inseparable from the small commu-

nities in the country had very few charms for him;—in short, he cared not one straw whether Miss Jemima Wilkins had grown unexpectedly stout, and the next morning “most miraculously recovered her shape;” or whether Miss Clarissa Smith had eloped with the sexton of the village, and thus, by the kind offices of the last attendant of us all, buried her reputation in a grave prepared by her tempter. Douglass attended the village church with punctuality; and he did it more with the desire—the fatal failing of the idle—of destroying a few hours, than under the idea of a religious obligation. It so happened that near the pulpit was a pew capable of holding only two; and as Douglass wished to borrow as much importance upon as economical a principle as possible, he took both seats, and sat alone in all his grandeur, to the very great annoyance of several of his most sincere and affectionate friends. One day in winter, when country churches are neither the warmest nor the dryest of brick buildings, just as the clergyman had given out his text, and the rustle of leaves had subsided, occasioned by the young

ladies hunting for the chapter and verse as if to catch the preacher in an error, the heavy footsteps of an elderly man were heard as he walked a few paces into the interior. Every eye was instantly directed towards the stranger; and notwithstanding the place, curiosity expressed itself in whispers, and the attention of the congregation was turned towards the old gentleman.

He wore a rather old acquaintance in the shape of a great-coat, and which certainly would have been none the worse for a hot iron and a piece of brown paper. He seemed to be fatigued with his walk, and leant over a pew which would have contained two more than inhabited it. He gave that intelligible look at the inmates, as much as to say, "Let me in;" but Christian charity was not the leading principle of the old women, who began immediately to spread themselves out, thereby apparently occupying the whole of the pew, and looking up significantly, as much as to respond, "Only see how you would incommode us!" The poor old gentleman advanced a little farther; but there seemed a general fear of contamination or of rheumatism, for some small rain

had fallen, and his rough coat seemed like plants covered with the morning dew. (Brummel once remarked, that he had caught cold by being put in a room with a damp stranger.) The intruder was evidently rather deaf, for he kept his right hand to his ear, making a kind of trumpet, and twisting his mouth over to the left side with the intention of opening the tube of hearing as much as possible, he continued to advance towards the pulpit by slow and measured paces, (for the clergyman dropped his voice at the conclusion of his sentence in such a manner as to be nearly inaudible,) until he reached Douglass. He instantly opened the door, and receiving a bow of acknowledgment, the stranger took his seat and continued to pay the greatest attention to the discourse. When the blessing was given and the congregation on the stir, the new acquaintance offered his hand, which was instantly taken; and as Douglass walked out of the church, the stranger placed his arm within his,—and although Douglass felt that the coat of the stranger and his were not made by the same tailor, and that one was new and the other old, yet he somehow felt

a pride at having done a commonly civil action, more particularly as his neighbours had acted in a contrary manner. Douglass thought he observed the sneers of some of his old female friends, and the gibes and laughs of the younger; for when the old gentleman put his hat on his head, he stood as good a representation of a bankrupt clothesman as Rag Fair could produce. If this man has no money, thought Robert, he does not act up to the advice, "Never be poor and show poor."

For some time the stranger was silent. He appeared more infirm than Robert had supposed, and he leant as heavily on his arm as a lame man does on a crutch. At last he spoke, and there was a mildness in his manner that was captivating in the extreme.

"I am," said he, addressing Douglass, "much obliged to you for your civility; for although it is said that in the house of God all are equal, yet those ladies seemed to think otherwise. They are fools for their pains!—they might have done a more gracious act than in denying rest to the weary, or in hindering one who cannot remain

much longer in this world from hearing comfortably the voice and the instruction of the clergyman. Pray what is your name?" said the old gentleman.

"Robert Douglass."

"Have you no other Christian name but Robert?"

"None," replied Robert.

"The name," continued the elderly gentleman, "is not unknown to me; for many years since, when I was wrecked near Madras, I received much attention from a gentleman of that name."

"It was my father," replied Robert.

The old gentleman stopped, looked at him long in the face, unheeding the titters of those who passed, and who, like all idle blockheads, seemed to wish to be informed of what wonderful conversation could take place between two men. "Your father must be numbered with the dead, I should imagine; for had he lived to this day, he would have been about eighty-four,—an age few attain who have lived for thirty-two years in that country: but he was a strong, temperate, and active-minded man."

“ He has been dead about six years,” replied Robert.

“ He ought to have died a wealthy man,” said the stranger, “ for he held high situations, and although he lived like a nabob, he must have left some lacs of rupees. And you,” he continued, “ how comes it that you are buried alive in this village ? You should be more actively employed than in the tattling company of old maidens or the solitary walk of a churchyard.”

“ My life has been unfortunate, and that which I inherited,” replied Robert, “ is almost gone — all but a bare sufficiency : I was robbed of it, plundered of it, and the perjurer lives and flourishes.”

“ The way of the world, sir,” replied the stranger : “ your thief is a nobleman until the gallows exalts him above his proper sphere. But did you gamble, did you lose it at play ?—tell me the truth, sir.”

“ I never played a card in my life,” he replied. “ I lost my money by a tissue of misfortunes, by the operation of a cruel law, by the ignorance of my adviser, by the perjuries of others.”

“Nothing more common,” replied the stranger: “false witnesses are as common in England as blackberries; it is of late years become a profession. But the law would ruin any man in the expenses upon justice.”

“And therefore,” resumed Robert, “as I cannot hold up my head where I once could do so, I have retired to this village; and am not sorry I have so done, since it affords me the pleasure of welcoming an old friend of my father’s. This is my house: though small, it is convenient; and although I am obliged to forego the luxuries, yet I have the necessaries of life. Pray, walk in, sir; and if you are inclined to pass some time in this retreat, allow me to offer you a bed, and whatever my humble roof contains. But as I have made you acquainted with my name, will you allow me to know that which must have been familiar to my father?”

The stranger walked in without answering; he placed his hat on a peg, shook the wet and rubbed the dirt from his coat, hung it up, pulled the tails down to avoid any wrinkles, produced an old pocket-handkerchief and flourished it over his

hat, pocketed his gloves, wiped his feet, and then walked into a small front parlour. Instead of warming his hands, he began to take off some of the coals, until he left the mere skeleton of a fire, although he shivered with cold. He took up so close a position as to endanger his inexpressibles.

“You are extravagant, Mr. Robert,—that is the name, ay?” and he took out an old almost worn-out pocket-book, and after rubbing some animation into his hands he wrote down, “Robert, the son of John Douglass.” “Now,” he continued, “who is your banker, or your lawyer, or anybody you know in London where I may find or hear of you; because if you come that way I shall be most happy to see you, and I sometimes like to make inquiries for my friends instead of their being obliged to hunt me up. But come near the fire; you must be cold so far away.”

It was quite evident to Robert that his friend was a character, and although he wished him anywhere else than in the place of which he had possessed himself, for he was a screen when it was least wanted, yet he resolved to humour him to the height of his bent.

The conversation soon took a much more extended range than finding fault; and when five o'clock came, they had tried many subjects, and amongst others gambling.—“Of all vices,” said the stranger, “this is the worst. The libertine may be reclaimed; the drunkard may listen to the warnings of disease; the prodigal may become sensible of the necessity of frugality; the liar may see the beauty of truth; the reprobate may be charmed by virtue: but the gambler never can be reclaimed. I speak not now of those who idle away, or while away, whichever you like, an hour, holding thirteen pieces of painted pasteboard, and putting down in silence the same colour and kind as their adversaries might have played; I speak not of the innocent amusement of a round-table party, or of those who, to gratify curiosity, pay the penalty of being inquisitive: but I speak of the real downright gamester, whose only occupation is play—who dreams of hazard, who awakes but to rattle the dice, and calculates nothing but chances—whose whole existence consists in robbing, or perhaps wishing to possess himself of the property of another—to whom the

ravings of the ruined are music, whose enjoyment is purchased by the sacrifice of others, whose smiles are provoked by the tears of the distressed, whose whole soul and body is bent upon the destruction of his neighbour for the aggrandizement of himself. That man is beyond the reach of redemption. Gambling is to the mind what opium is to the body; deprive the one or the other of the now necessary excitement, and the patient dies. I do not speak these words as idle loungers retail the borrowed sentences of great writers, —too well I know the consequences from the horror I have experienced: I lost my only son from this infernal vice, and painful as it is to me to recall the bitter lesson, yet I shrink not from the task of warning others from that destructive path. My poor, poor boy! yes, willingly would I lay down those riches, which make me the envy of my neighbours, for the pleasure of again folding you in my arms; and as I bathed your face from the tears of my heart, pour out my blessings and forgiveness on your repentant head! But he is gone for ever! never more shall I gaze upon his face, never more shall I listen to the ani-

inated description which youth gives when pleasure is the subject ; but now an old decrepid pilgrim, fast verging to that end where I shall again rest near him, and where the staff of age shall be thrown aside, and the quiet of the Christian's grave obtained." Here the old gentleman's feelings got the better of his resolution, and after wiping his eyes and going to the window with the intention of concealing his emotion, he returned again to his seat, and taking Robert by the hand, he said : " After dinner I will hold up a mirror which shall scare you, if you are a gambler ; I will convince you of the folly, the madness, the iniquity of the act ; and as I am already wearied, I will accept your offer of a bed. My portmanteau is at the public-house where I alighted as the coach passed through. I had intended proceeding onwards to night to Cheltenham ; but I am feeble and ill, and want the requisite stamina for the undertaking." Saying which, he arose, and taking down his great-coat, he again removed some few specks of dirt, and was proceeding to wear it, when Robert suggested that as he was younger, he could go and have the portmanteau

conveyed to his house. "No," he replied, "I will do it myself;" and although faltering in his steps, he crossed the street, and shortly afterwards Robert saw him return carrying his own luggage, and tottering fearfully at every step.

From the words which had escaped him, and the extreme contradiction between his expressions and his apparent condition, Robert was anxious if possible to glean some records of his life. His name he had carefully concealed; his portmanteau was without an address; his hat had the word 'Golgotha,' the place of a skull, marked therein; and his pocket-handkerchief had hardly a corner whereon to affix an initial;—yet had he talked of the wealth which made others envious, he had hinted that he would lay down *all* for one glimpse of his departed son, and his conversation was so much above the common run of familiar phrases that Robert was lost in conjecture. It was evident he was of a miserly turn: the attention to his coat and hat, the manner in which he deprived himself of the fire, the niggard care with which he fed the flame, all convinced Robert that if

he had a fortune, it had been one of the many saved, not made.

During his absence, Robert mounted two bottles of good old port, and placed them not far from the fire. The evening was closing in, and the drizzling rain rendered it more obscure than was usual at that season of the year. The little fire was stirred, which Robert ventured to increase; and when the curtains were drawn, the shutters fastened, the *two* candles lighted, the table-cloth clean, and the silver polished, Robert flattered himself, (for he afterwards looked back with some satisfaction upon the remembrance of that evening,) although the home was small, it was comfortable, and while the wind increased, and the rain fell in torrents, he and his aged companion were sheltered from both, and in the enjoyment of all that the frugal could require.

CHAPTER II.

DOUGLASS directed the servant, a rather plump-looking red-armed country girl, to assist the stranger with his load; and shortly he heard him stumping about over his head. The maid was instructed to tell him that the sheets were before the kitchen fire, and begged to know if he would have one in his room. This last he refused in a sullen manner, saying that three fires in a house were sufficient to warm Windsor Castle. Douglass resolved not to make any addition to his usual Sunday's cheer, which consisted of a piece of roast-beef, some bursting potatoes, and a Yorkshire-pudding: a small plum-pudding was to form the centre of the repast, whilst some apples and dried fruit brought up the rear.

It was just six o'clock when the stranger entered the parlour; and no man could have recognised,

in the clean gentlemanly deportment, the ragsman resurrectionist of the morning. His hair, white by nature, had been carefully powdered, and his whole appearance would have done credit to a finished courtier. Douglass now saw what a tailor and a powder-puff could do for a man : the stiff air of the first acquaintance was superseded by an easy smile, his manner had changed with his habits, and scarcely ever could Robert remember to have seen a gentleman at his age who had fewer of the dirty appendages of seventy. With a good appetite, seeing he was most heartily welcome, he began his dinner ; and although the fire burned brightly, and the sherry and the port were produced, he never once made a remark upon the extravagance of the repast. He asked if Robert was generally as comfortable as he appeared to be ; and being assured that he had made no addition to his dinner, the stranger expressed himself pleased, and his heart soon began to warm with the wine.

The frugal fare finished, Robert begged him to accept of a large arm-chair, and to turn towards the fire. They drew the table a little nearer, and

placing the port wine within reach of both, might have challenged the world to have shown a happier couple, at least in appearance. It was one of those delectable December evenings when the rain seemed to come from a fireman's engine, and falling with such regularity on the windows, that a novice might fancy the winter was employed to wash away the dust of the summer, and that the task was not easily performed.

“I have not known for five years the pleasure I experience at this moment,” began the stranger: “a kind calm satisfaction steals over my heart, and life, which this morning I would have laid down without paying a doctor's fee to have avoided so doing, now seems worth preserving. It is five years since I lost my only child: he was six-and-twenty years of age, and a handsomer man breathed not in Europe. From that hour I became a weed thrown upon the wide ocean of existence, if carried by the current north or south I cared not; I wandered over the world a poor old miserable being, I hated the society of men, and I dreaded that of the other sex; I became indifferent as to my dress, the luxuries of

life I detested, and when I heard the laugh and merriment of others, I flew from it like a stricken deer with the barbed arrow rankling in its side. For five years I have never felt the ease, the comfort, the relief of the load I carried, that I do at this minute; and such is the extraordinary change which has crept over me, that I hardly feel inclined to hold up the mirror to you which before dinner I had promised to produce, in order to warn you from the dreadful, dangerous path of gambling."

Robert begged the stranger on no account to return to his sorrows, but if possible to forget them, and for once afford him the gratification of believing that he had been instrumental to his happiness.

"No, no," he replied; "we have all our duties to perform in this life, and mine is to save the purchase of experience in others. And now to my task: the story is long, the subject is painful, but the moral is good.

"After my having remained," he began, "a bachelor until I was ^{thirty eight} ~~fifty five~~ years of age, I conceived a violent passion for a lady of thirty, who at the

increasing with the age of his son

expiration of six weeks became my wife. About a year after my marriage, my wife was safely delivered of a male child, which was christened Henry. His early youth was not distinguished by any very particular circumstance: he grew up to manhood without being a poet at twelve, or a sailor at thirteen. The great error *I* made; and that was, not obliging him to have a profession. I had in India amassed an ample fortune, and the settlements on my wife, which must have descended to him, were sufficient to have gratified the vanity of even a nobleman. To this first error of mine I am inclined to attribute all the mischief which followed his steps. There is no mistake more fatal than the encouragement of idleness: it is, as the copy says, the root of all evil, I never knew an idle man who, if he escaped burthening his neighbours, avoided being vicious: the mind that is not directed to one object, generally neglects all, or only flippantly skims the surface over which it hurries. The first consequence of idleness was love. Love, as Johnson says, has no power but over those it finds unemployed: so it occurred that my son Henry at the age of nineteen ima-

gined himself in love with the second daughter of a respectable clergyman, who was encumbered with a large family, and not a very ample fortune. On my discovering this fatal step, I opposed all the authority of a parent. It has been urged by some authors, that, providing no blot is upon the fair fame of the lady, and that an equality of birth is beyond a doubt, the parent has no sufficient grounds for withholding his consent: but the man who first circulated this erroneous doctrine contributed his portion of mischief to the world; for if the law does not consider the act of a minor valid, it is because that law imagines the mind not sufficiently formed, and consequently leaves him under the direction of the parent. The more I opposed this foolish match, the more resolutely he maintained his determination to gain his point. I loved—dearly, fondly loved him, and his mother doted with maternal affection on her offspring: never had we differed in opinion, and now we both ~~was~~ the ruin of our son from this ill-placed affection. He argued, and justly, that the daughter of a clergyman of the Established Church was equal

to any man in rank ; and in this, as I am no leveler of the church, no overthrower of its ancient establishment, no violator of its rights or purloiner of its wealth, I fully and frankly acknowledged it was the youth of both parties, and their exact equality of age, which caused my dissent : for although the woman may be of a sufficient age at nineteen, and it is dangerous in most cases to allow them a settled plan of life before marriage, and although I would rather they married at that age or twenty than any other, yet I did not consider this argument as applicable to my son ; for no man should marry until he is past his thirty-fourth year ;—the mind is then properly formed, the dearly-bought experience of youth will guide him steadily through life, and his affections, not the hasty ebullition of youth, will be lasting and sincere : besides which, at the age of forty the woman would be verging upon wrinkles, whilst the man would be in the prime of life. I took a middle path,—since I found objection, positive objection—only likely to hasten the event. I proposed that they should wait until he was of age, and then, if their minds and affections re-

mained unaltered, I would celebrate his arriving at maturity and his marriage on the same day. In the mean time he was to travel abroad, and thus rub off a little of the rust which seemed to clog his understanding.

“ This plan appeared to give general satisfaction, and my son, after vowing all vows of constancy, departed with a friend, an old schoolfellow, but who was nearly eight years his senior in life, for the alleged purpose of crossing to France and extending his trip to Italy. I blessed him at parting, his mother hung upon his neck, the tears of all were shed abundantly, and even now—but I am childish and childless—I cannot restrain these burning drops which course so rapidly down my poor old furrowed face. He had never deceived me, he had never told me a falsehood, — he had ever been candid, ingenuous, open. He promised to remain abroad for two years; he had unlimited credit—in short, there was nothing left undone which could be done to render him comfortable and respectable. Imagine, sir,”—said the old man, his face crimsoning with vexation, “ imagine, I say, my horror,

my surprise, my disgust, — most undisguised disgust, when I heard that the carriage I had purchased for his comfort, that very night contained the person he had abjured for two years ; and that, instead of the Continent, he had taken the North road, was married, and most seriously repentant before a week had elapsed :

‘ The lovely toy so fiercely sought,
Had lost its charm by being caught,’

as Byron says ; he found himself shackled, hampered, tied to a stake for life.

“ Repentance ever comes too late ; but his was sincere. He wrote a most affectionate letter, praying us to forgive him, and I need scarcely say that we did so : he and his bride were received into our house,—for we thought it more advisable to guide his mind in the right way than to leave it to the meanderings of its own fickleness. They managed the first two months pretty well, the families became intimate, and I found in the excellent disposition and well-informed mind of the clergyman everything to admire. It was, however, about this time that both parties spoke often of a Continental trip, and once more was the carriage laden for that

route. As his allowances were large, there was no occasion to starve the cause. We saw them go with hope and spirit, high and fresh : they started, and arrived safe in that sink of iniquity, Paris.

“ It is but justice to say that Henry was as idle as the father of all mischief could have wished. His mode of life was disreputable in the extreme : he could not study, but he would lie for hours on the sofa smoking those abominations, cigars. Rolled up in a fanciful dressing-gown, with yellow slippers—and even Turkish in imagination, I verily believe he esteemed it a crime to ‘ think ’—hour after hour of the most brilliant part of life was consumed in this dirty, disgusting, unmanly habit, and one might as well have slept on the counter of a tobacconist’s shop as reclined a head upon his pillow. Nothing tends more to ensure love than decency and cleanliness : Swift has said—

‘ If decency brings no supplies
Opinion falls, and beauty dies ;’

and the man who indulges in the misnamed gratification of putting the smoke into his mouth for one moment in order to puff it out the next,

must find a partner equally ignorant with the Turkish women, and equally under authority, to either sanction or allow it.

“ She was one taught to place all confidence in her husband ; and whilst her eyes were dazzled with the gaudiness of my son’s equipage, and the homage paid to her beauty, she overlooked the annoyance which then she could not appreciate. But now she lived in an atmosphere of tobacco ; she was haunted by the idle footsteps of her husband ; he lounged about the rooms like an unquiet spirit ; he could neither devote an hour to a book, or a quarter to a letter ; he resembled an everlasting steam-boat in motion, and was winded afar from his smoke and his smell. But still there was no sin in him ; the vice, the radical root was in his heart, and he soon felt its influence. ‘ My dear,’ said his wife to him, ‘ why don’t you go out and amuse yourself ? surely Paris has novelty,—novelty is always desirable ; go, my dear, to Père Lachaise, the Louvre, or wander amongst this gay people on the Boulevards.’—‘ Not I,’ he would answer ; ‘ I have no curiosity to see a few bedizened

grave-stones, or to read the general lying epitaphs with which every mother thinks fit to compliment her son, or every daughter to daub for a parent. What am I to see in the Louvre but a parcel of pictures? and to be obliged to turn over a catalogue to find out the subject. Besides, if I had no other objection but the following,—it would be fatal, they do not permit smoking.’

“ Poor Eliza, the best, the tenderest, the most enchanting of her sex, only responded by a deep sigh: she looked at him, she watched the working of his countenance, and in spite of her general guarded manner, a smile of pity crossed her face. ‘ Ay, ay, I see,’ said my son, ‘ you are getting preciously tired of me, and think, no doubt, that there is some truth in the proverb, “ Marry in haste, and repent at leisure.” I wish that child of yours was born, and then you would have something to mind, without bothering me by your observations and advice. Oh, Lord! how thankful I should be if some Christian of my acquaintance would come to this cursed outlandish place!—Ah,

now you cry ! Why, what the devil have I said to make you cry ? Is this your love ? is this the way you are pleased to show your contentment ?—or rather, is this the mode by which you seek to upbraid me ?’

“ The poor little wife said not a word, but she hastily endeavoured to dry her eyes and to force a smile upon her cheeks ; but Nature was true to herself, and deception had not learned to conquer her. ‘ Well,’ said my son, ‘ since my presence gives you pain, I will relieve you by my absence.’—‘ What time, my dear, will you return to dinner ?’ said that charming creature. ‘ Oh, six or eight, or perhaps not at all,’ was the reply. ‘ Why, are you so dependant upon me, that you must have me to feed you, or to tickle you ? I believe it is true, that “ women are but children of a larger growth.” There is a looking-glass and a sugar-plum, and you ought to be in paradise.’ With this unfeeling, insolent remark, he had his great-coat placed upon his shoulders, his gloves given him ; but he actually exerted himself so much, that he placed his own hat on his own head.

“ I have merely mentioned this conversation in order to show that boys are not intended for husbands, and that a person ought to know his own mind before he seeks to govern others. Love is a very pretty moth ; but each touch brushes away its beauties.—However, to proceed.

“ On that fatal day when the conversation above mentioned took place, it did occur that my son found one of his schoolfellows. He seems to have rejoiced in an excuse to be absent from his wife, with whom he was thoroughly satiated ; and that evening, after dining with his friend, he attended a *soirée* given by the mother, and there saw the sister, a girl of about seventeen, described as lovely in the extreme. His mind, without occupation, soon gave way to the new pleasure of this girl’s society ; he remained until the last, he hardly quitted her for a moment, and when he retraced his steps to his hotel, situated in the Rue Richelieu, he had already entertained thoughts which were too sure to ripen in the soil which only received one object. In the mean time his expenses were increased—presents were purchased of great value, and after two or three weeks

almost living in his friend's house, and having perfectly neglected his home, his wife, his all—but his cigar, and having driven this new attachment to the very Père Lachaise and Louvre he before despised, it was evident that his heart had received an impression very likely to erase that occasioned by the charms of his wife.

“Meantime, the gentle, meek Eliza was slowly recovering the sight of which love had deprived her: she found herself perfectly neglected, for when in her society, he was invariably hasty, morose, unkind, ungrateful. It was her letter to her sister that first gave me uneasiness; for although I had watched with some alarm the increased amount of his expenditure, yet as he never had mentioned one word on the subject of gambling, I confess I did not anticipate the storm about to burst over our heads. In the letter written by Eliza to her sister, there was a marked difference of manner: instead of the gay and animated description—the numerous retailings of anecdotes, the follies and the fashions, with which the letters of ladies are usually filled, it was a cold production, in which it was evident that appre-

hension had triumphed over affection ; but there was such lurking love, and such fear of losing it, that when it was shown to me, I remember being obliged to leave the room to avoid the expression of my fears. That letter I have preserved, and here it is. I preserved it in the first instance from admiration of the writer ; and now, as a reproach to myself for not having instantly crossed the water to have reclaimed my son. But parents are as blind as lovers, and we are slow to believe what we wish to discredit. I will read it to you : it is in vain you would urge me to desist ; it is a punishment I owe myself, and a warning I owe to you." He then read as follows :—

“ Paris.

“ MY EVER DEAREST MARY,

“ My last letter, written one short week since, was penned under very different circumstances from this : the excitement occasioned by visiting strange places, of listening to a strange people, and of following strange fashions, is passed ; now I feel quite tired of the place and the people, and find myself alone in the midst of a

populous city. But it is quite the contrary with Henry, who at first remained entirely at home, but now is estranged from it. His mornings, noons, and almost his nights, are spent with a family of the name of Stanhope; the brother of his admiration having been an old schoolfellow of Henry's, who is just emancipated from his college. I cannot tell you how painfully jealous I have become; for I see—even *I* see a total alteration of his manner. Instead of the eager morning salutations, the constant kind attention, and the unremitted affection, I find him cold, reserved, silent, and sometimes angry. He seems to have left me entirely; or when I am so fortunate as to occupy one moment's conversation, I am sure to hear of the charms, the *unrivalled* charms of this Louisa. Had this blow come suddenly, I should have sunk under it; but it has approached gradually, and I as gradually became habituated to his absence. In vain I have asked him to return to, or let me return to you; for although I know I am wrong in even asking to leave him, yet I feel I cannot much longer bear this silent neglect without a mur-

mur ; and, oh ! my dearest Mary, it is vain I should attempt to describe the feelings which creep over me. Oftentimes I think how foolish, how weak, how woman-like are my fears ; because I see this girl surrounded by her family and her brothers—they know that Henry is married, and she likewise knows it, and yet I cannot help feeling that they may be thrown off their guard from the very knowlege of the fact. Then that I, who adored him, loved him, cherished him,—yes, my God ! that ever I can entertain fears of his constancy or of his affection !—I had written thus far, when Henry came home, flushed with animation, and in a humour to which he has long been a stranger. It appears that Mr. Stanhope took him to a place called Frascati's, and that Henry, who has not the smallest inclination to gamble, threw down a napoleon,—a kind of fee which he thought requisite to pay for his intrusion, on a table, the name of the game being strange to him. After walking about the room quite heedless of the stake, he returned to the table, and was astonished to find a heap of gold and notes lying there. One of the servants of the

establishment pointed to the money, and told him that his original stake had doubled itself to that amount; upon which he very wisely withdrew, and came home in so good a humour that I almost wish he would occasionally visit that place, of which previously to this day I had conceived the most serious horror. His winnings amounted to five hundred and twelve napoleons, the colour on which he placed his napoleon having won nine times following.—But, Mary, to think for one moment that the paltry sum above mentioned, and which by his signature he may procure every day of the week, should have rendered him happy, and excited him so much, is another painful idea. Everything seems to please him, however trifling, but myself;—and yet I am ungrateful in my thoughts, for he kissed me fervently just now, and is going, dear good fellow! to dine at home to-day, and his young friend is coming also.—The fashions of the day are still the same,’ &c. &c.

“The rest of the letter,” said the old gentleman, folding up the despatch, “is on the subjects on which ladies generally write one to another,—

family news, bonnets, new-invented gloves, and a treasure of a shoemaker or a lady's maid ; but in the part I have read to you, you will trace the first false step since his marriage ;—you will see that, having married before his mind was ripened into a steady affection, before he could appreciate the devotion of one of the most lovely of her sex, he had given way to a new passion, he had allowed his heart to lean towards another, and he had taught himself to believe that his wife was not necessary to his happiness. This strong excitement remained until gambling, like a stronger poison, drove out, or for a moment killed, the other ; and you will find that in destroying partially the second love, it entirely quenched the first, and left his wife a prey to anguish and to distrust.”

CHAPTER III.

THE old gentleman was considerably exhausted, and he required some stimulant to recover him. Robert therefore recommended the wine; and after wiping his eyes and drinking a glass, he started afresh with his anecdote, and thus continued:

“It appears that after the dinner mentioned in the letter, Henry and his friend agreed to visit the gambling-houses in the Palais Royal, finishing the evening at the Salon, the father of all the mischief. The same games were played at all, until he found himself ushered into the splendid apartments of the Salon des Etrangers. Here was a round table on which hazard was played, and here my son took a seat, and remained in it until two o’clock in the morning. At first he was again successful, but latterly he lost back all he had won, with some trifle besides.

“ He returned to his wife about three o’clock. She had remained awaiting his arrival: although under all the pain and all the sickness to which women are subject during pregnancy, yet was she resolved to prove her devotion to him beyond a doubt,—even in a gambler’s mind. Finding her still in the saloon, Henry, so far from being grateful for the attention, rebuked her for her folly, and in a tone of voice at once authoritative and ungenerous, he desired her to go to bed. His manner was that of an enraged tyrant; he walked hastily to and fro in the room, and when she lingered, he even threatened to push her from his presence.

“ ‘Never, never, dearest Henry, did I expect,’ she said, ‘to hear such words from your lips!—never, when I gave you my hand at the altar, did I imagine that six months afterwards you would spurn me from you! I know your goodness of heart, and I feel that your own words will be a greater rebuke to your mind than any I could utter even if I would. Kiss me, dearest, and I will go. I have been in great pain, and I watched the hand of that little watch, your first

present to me, hoping for your return ; but now you are not what you were, or I should not have had to solicit that little mark of affection which even now you withhold.'

“ He looked at her apparently more in sorrow than in anger, whilst she with her bed candle in one hand advanced the other to his shoulder, and holding her pretty face as inviting him to kiss her, she remained watching the working of his countenance, whilst the smile of hope which played over her pale features might have tempted the most obdurate.

“ ‘ Go, go,’ he said, pushing her gently from him,—‘ go ; and when next you feel indisposed, you had better sleep, than spy upon your husband.’ She burst into tears, and left the room. Ah, fatal is the word, the voice of unkindness upon the heart of the truly affectionate ! How many a man has unintentionally uttered what his pride forbade him to recall ! and how many are made miserable by the mere intonation of voice in the person they love ! In vain she endeavoured to conceal her distress—her agitation of mind produced a serious sickness, and before three days had witnessed the inattention of Henry

to a sick wife by day, and his absence by night, his hope of becoming a father had vanished, and the prospect of being a widower was more than probable. To me he even neglected to write an account of the accident which had occurred; and although his wife constantly sent the maid to urge him to this filial duty, yet love, and affection, and duty, and propriety, were dead within him, and all were buried in the gambler's mind. She recovered slowly, for she was reserved for many sorrows:—

‘Death shuns the wretch who fain the blow would meet.’

From the fall of hope in regard to being a mother, she fell into a low state of sickness: the indifference—the growing indifference amounting almost to hatred in her husband, the resolution with which she endeavoured to bear it, soon completely undermined her beauty and sapped her health; the attractive powers she once possessed were gone, and she had no enticement to lure back her fugitive husband but her voice, and he seldom came within the reach of that soft persuasive woman, to be recalled from his erroneous path. She wrote another

letter to Mary, in which she more plainly alluded to the severed affection of her husband, and once more she mentioned the name of Louisa Stanhope; but it was more than evident that she entertained some fears that although gambling might have alienated the affections of Henry from herself, yet that Louisa still occupied some portion of his thoughts and time was certain. This letter was never shown to me; it was agreed by my daughter-in-law's family that I should only become incensed still more against my son, and they looked forward with hope that the influence of their sister might still prove to be of some avail.

“In a few words I shall draw you the character of Louisa Stanhope. Of her beauty—that fatal gift, I shall merely say, that as much perfection as the painter's art could throw into the form and face of Venus might be found in her. She was rather dark in complexion, her hair and eyes being as black as night; every feature was correct, and her mouth has been even represented as surpassing that of any other woman alive. Her education had been neglected—she had been poisoned by novels. However light the trash, so long as it con-

tained a love-story, on this she fed and fattened. To her, the man who smoked, swore, and gambled, was perfection ; and she in vain imagined that the hero of romance could be concealed in the demure look, the cautious expressions, and the timid manner, which might cover the generous and affectionate disposition of mind, or the bold and determined courage of the heart. Henry was exactly to her imagination ; in him were all the accomplishments of such flippant folly in perfection : he was handsome, and, like most gamblers, generous ; he was bold, forward, authoritative. It is strange how women like such men, for they would rather be governed than courted, and he who is bold in love will very seldom fail of success : your timid man always is rebuked ; your bold man, who seems to have for his motto, ‘ They can conquer who believe they can,’ is the surest of his love. Louisa saw, and loved him : the impediment of marriage was no bar to her affections ; she had read of happiness obtained even by such rashness, and the more the danger, the more she seemed to court it ; she encouraged him, she clandestinely accepted

his presents, and he soon made her the depository of every sentiment of his heart. He was now perfectly estranged from his wife, he even told her that she was painful to his sight. The climax of her woes was fast approaching: for two days and two nights she never heard or saw him; the fourth brought her a letter without any date, desiring her to return to her parents, as he never more intended to see her. The letter mentioned that Louisa Stanhope, now with him, would for ever share his heart, his fortune, and his affections.' This, which would have killed others, partially restored her to strength and temporary health. Without writing one word, she immediately left Paris. She arrived in England, and hastening to the quiet retreat of her father, she drove to the house about nine o'clock, at which time the pious father had assembled his family and his servants, and was imploring the great God of all to shower down his blessings upon mankind. No sooner was she liberated from the carriage, than she rushed like a maniac to the long-known room; and as her father was about, in rather a subdued tone, to supplicate the protection of his

Maker, the door was violently thrown open, and a loud shriek announced her presence. That shriek was re-echoed by all : there, in the midst of them, stood a being unknown to any ; her features were half concealed by the disordered hair, and though visible, were so altered by care and sickness, that the parent knew not his own, or the sister the being of her affection. ‘ ’Tis me, ’tis Eliza,’ she cried, and fell down prostrate on the floor : ‘ oh, save me ! for I am all alone.’ She fainted, and fortunately she did so, for such was the horror of the scene, that had it continued none could have borne it. What followed is beyond description ; the scene of woe, of misery, of sorrow, baffles all words, all power of delineation.

“ She was removed instantly, and two days elapsed before we knew the worst. I was sent for directly, but I was forbidden to see her,—the medical gentleman strictly desired that none should be admitted but her mother ; and rather would I that she never had returned to reason, and to comparative health, than have heard from the mouth of my daughter-in-law—from her who was like my own flesh and blood, the base, un-

manly, ungenerous, horrible, and unnatural behaviour of my son—my only boy. Oh, never, never shall I forget the feelings of that moment ! I could have stabbed her and smiled, as she poisoned the very stream of my existence : I hated with such a hatred that no words can convey, and in the bitter ravings of my maniac heart I cursed her for ever and for ever ! The very intellect with which God had endowed me was deranged : the very son with which he had blessed me was made a villain, too plainly to admit of exculpation ; the very daughter whom I loved as my own was the harbinger of my woe !

“ I was conveyed home, and long did I linger in a state which deprived me of the management of my affairs or the remembrance of my sorrows : during that time Eliza died. I have been told that excess of grief may sometimes relieve the patient, and that when misfortunes come so heavily, the human heart can withstand the shock ; but her fortitude was gone, and her love remained. She lingered and lingered : in vain the good father attempted to administer consolation from that source from which most can derive it ; in

vain he pointed to Heaven, and prayed that his daughter might receive the blessing of resolution to withstand the assault ; gradually and gradually life gently ebbed away ; she never spoke from the moment that in my madness I cursed her, but, surrounded by her family, she fixed her steady gaze upon her mother, and sometimes convulsively grasping her hand, she would endeavour to articulate. None could distinguish the sounds ; the efforts grew weaker and weaker, and seven days from the moment of her first discovery of the cause she died without a struggle and without a groan.

“ It was six months from the time of her decease before I was allowed to be made acquainted with her death ; and from that moment has a cloud hung over my happiness which no lightning will ever dissipate. I will not sorrow you with my sorrows, neither will I call more tears than those which I have seen fall during the recital of my anecdote from your eyes. Hard must be the heart, and unenviably inclosed within itself, that softens not at the miseries of age, or for the misfortunes of the virtuous ; and he but faintly

can appreciate the pleasures of life, who neither participates in the woes of others, or whose heart is hardened against the misfortunes of his friend.

“To resume my story, now growing towards its greatest interest. When I was permitted to resume the management of my affairs, I found four letters from my bankers, mentioning my account being overdrawn by several thousands of pounds. Aware that I could always replace the same at a moment, I heeded not the intelligence half so much as I did the cause of this lavish expenditure. To me my son had never written since his scandalous alliance with that shameless woman : I knew not where he was, and I hardly knew how to find him. It occurred to me that by stopping his income I should insure detection of his abode ; and accordingly, having seen that he it was who had drawn such immense sums during so small a space of time, I wrote to my bankers, desiring them to inform Henry that I saw no longer any occasion for such an income as he had appropriated to his use, and that I should stop every supply until he returned to me. This

letter sealed his fate. But it is requisite that I retrace my steps, in order to make you master of the subject.

“ When my son first accomplished his design, he retired to Versailles with the sister of his most intimate friend ; but, knowing that I should take such steps as to force him to return to his wife, he that day drew a check for the amount of four thousand pounds. On receiving it, the bankers wrote me a letter, mentioning the largeness of the sum. This letter arrived the very day that I was torn from the dying-bed of my daughter, and it remained unopened until the expiration of the six months above mentioned,—the bankers in the mean time having paid it. Shakspeare says,

‘ Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove ;’

and I have never found that great man to be in error. The love so suddenly transferred to Louisa was not destined to be of very long duration. Even now he should have controlled his feelings more than in marriage, for he had ruined this second object of his heart for ever ; and

the only resource she could hope for, by which her own wounded pride might be partially relieved, was in his unalterable affection and kindness towards her. This I say—this reflection should have occupied his thoughts, for he had the power of applying an antidote to the worst of poisons. It is no trifling act for a woman to do, to leave her friends, her parents, her sisters, her reputation, her *name*, and all for love. The man who consents to this wholesale ruin is doubly bound to be true to her, or to shelter her; and he who, having deprived the casket of the jewel which was within it, leaves the casket to the world's scorn and obloquy, is such a villain that no pencil can portray, or I describe—the female world will excuse any sin but this. Even the charms of beauty with which Louisa had been cursed were not sufficiently powerful to enchain the affections of Henry; for he became ashamed of himself, and heartily disgusted with his own conduct. The papers had conveyed to him the intelligence of the death of his wife; and as his heart still beat with existence, a little remorse mingled itself in the

cup of pleasure, of which already he had drunk to intoxication and satiety. With her he mastered his feelings; but with the return to sobriety came the wish for the greater excitement of gambling. As the family of the Stanhopes still remained in Paris, he felt very insecure in his operations there, for the young gentleman who initiated him hung round the table like a fly to carrion; and Henry, fearful—for guilt is always timid—of detection, removed his victim to Spa, a place which at that time was filled by fashionable idlers, inexorable swindlers, and determined gamblers. There he occupied rooms in the Hôtel de Flandre, certainly the best in the place: the lady took his name, and they were received as man and wife. Here it was that the first re- crimination occurred between them, and it arose from hope being suddenly blighted. Louisa Stanhope, who, when she first absconded from her home, was often heard to say,

‘Not Cæsar’s Empress would I deign to prove:

No! make me *mistress* to the man I love.’

Yet now that the obstacle to their legal union was removed, she felt that the performance of

that duty would most materially tend to soften her feelings, and would in some measure restore her to the path from which she had swerved. The common people say, it is ‘making an honest woman;’ but, honest or not, she felt that she usurped a name which did not belong to her, and that Henry, who had ten thousand times declared that in the event of his wife’s death he would marry her, would likewise experience some pleasure in the fulfilment of his word. But Henry had become a villain, and even now would rather have shaken off the burthen which he felt encumbered him. Still she loved as few women ever loved; his voice was to her sweet music, his smile was a rapture; and when he fixed his eyes on hers, she was like the bird fascinated by the snake.

“ ‘Henry, dearest Henry,’ she said one morning as the bell of the Catholic church, close to the hotel, swung its deep tones over the valley of Spa, ‘that bell might remind you of a promise you have as yet failed to fulfil, but which I know I have only to mention, and you will gratify my not unreasonable or unjust re-

quest. 'You remember, dearest,' she said, as she laid her open hand upon his shoulder,—‘you remember that under the promise of a future marriage I consented to forfeit my own and the world's esteem. How I have felt this none could tell; but now I feel that by being placed in the proper position of your wife, I should be more happy and contented, than as a walking falsehood, one who calls herself what she is not, and who adds to her former crimes by imposing wilfully on others. It is true that the year which is generally spent in mourning has not yet elapsed: but our union can be private; and, as you have long since laid aside the crape and the gloves of outward show, you can easily overcome the fashionable feeling, in the good and honourable action you would perform.’

“ ‘Ay?’ replied Henry.

“ Struck a little by the insufferable coolness, she again repeated the proposition; when the unfeeling fellow replied,

“ ‘Nonsense, my dear, nonsense! how can you be married at this place? It is true there is a church in Vauxhall; but there is no bishop for

a licence, and no priest to perform the ceremony. Perhaps you wish me to turn Catholic, and get wedded in that outlandish-looking place opposite ? Be patient, my dear.'

" ' Patient, Henry, I have been, and still must be. There, don't look so displeased, and I will not remind you of it again *here*. But if you knew how conscience *sometimes* awakes the slumbering virtue which still remains in me —if you did but know the satisfaction I should experience by my release from my present degradation, you would be the first to lighten the burden I bear, and to restore me to cheerfulness and to myself. Thank Heaven, we are taught that repentance, though late, may be acceptable ; and I am fully aware how seriously I have injured my parents and my family by the fatal step I took, and in which I am now persevering.'

" ' I think, my dear,' replied Henry, ' you had better volunteer to preach next Sunday : you would make out a capital case, as the lawyers say. There, don't bother me now ; for I am sadly out of humour by the eternal run

of ill-luck which seems to follow me wherever I go.'

" 'And if you could but make home your residence, that annoyance would cease, and you be happy.'

" 'Never,' he replied ; ' that is gone for ever : and so, like Goldsmith, " I must make that happiness I cannot find."

" ' But why night after night pursue the same fatal occupation ? Already have you lost two thousand pounds, and our expenses here are daily augmenting : cannot you wean yourself from that which only occasions hours of uneasiness, sleepless nights, and ruined health ?'

" ' I wish most sincerely I could,' replied my son, looking significantly at Louisa ; ' I confess I should be happier if I could divest my mind and myself from *their incumbrances*.' Saying which, he turned round and walked out of the room.

" It is a duty I owe Louisa, to confess she was a woman very far above the common run of the sex. To a mind naturally strong, but unfortu-

nately with a wrong bias, she joined a sweetness of disposition, a patience under sufferings, a calmness in danger, and a courage in adversity, which would make a hero in a man; but she was a woman still, and she felt the neglect, the cutting allusion, the cool disregard, most poignantly. It appears that her family had traced her, and had written to her, offering again to receive her; and although she tore the letter into the smallest pieces, and more fervently kissed a small miniature of Henry, yet she could not help contrasting the difference between the kind and affectionate letter of those she had deceived, and the harsh, unmanly, unwarrantable language in him who had deceived her: for very plainly she saw that her marriage was not likely to take place for months, if at all; and that she, like all other women who have swerved from virtue, found herself tolerated rather than beloved. With a resignation worthy of a better cause, she resolved to wait the result of time; and, after retiring to her room; and weeping away the first feeling of displeasure, she again occupied her saloon in all the grandeur of solitude, and

there worked and worked until the hour of midnight, when my son returned.

“The diabolical scowl upon his countenance checked the utterance of a welcome which was already upon Louisa’s lips. He threw his hat aside, and throwing himself upon the sofa, gave vent to his feelings in cursings and execrations both loud and deep. He had lost, and lost heavily, — indeed, so much as to distress him for present purposes ; and thus the conversation which followed was not likely to be conducive to peace of mind to Louisa, or restoration of temper to himself.

“‘I have kept some tea for you, Henry, my love,’ said the affectionate girl, ‘and I would not go to bed until you returned, in order that I might see you had it properly made.’

“‘I had rather be without it,’ he replied surlily ; ‘for although I believe myself to be as arrant a villain as ever lived, yet I do not like to take that for which I cannot pay.’

“Louisa smiled and looked at him.

“‘You smile, do you, little fool ! but it is

no time for that now. I have lost every farthing I have in the world ;—I most solemnly declare, that if the crown of the greatest country in Europe were mine if I could produce one napoleon, most religiously do I aver that I have not the wealth required to purchase it.’

“ ‘ Well,’ replied Louisa, ‘ then I would soon see the crown on Henry’s head. Take my jewels, those you so liberally gave me ; and though I do not part with the smallest trifle you ever offered me without regret, yet now, if there is a necessity for the sacrifice, take them all. And here is my watch, and all but this ring this dear ring ; with this I cannot part until poverty forces us from our roof, or Henry is unfaithful.’

“ ‘ There, there, Louisa, do not make such a long speech about nothing : the jewels will be useful for the present ; but as to the watch, you can keep it—but for how long is a matter of doubt.’

“ ‘ Be careful, dearest, how you dispose of them, or the report will be over this little place in a moment.’

“Thank you, *madam*, for your advice. I dare say you think me such a precious fool as to stand at the hotel-door like a Jew pedlar, asking the passers-by to purchase my wares. Go to bed, do: whenever women talk of anything but embroidery or bonnets, they invariably talk nonsense. I shall go to Brussels to-morrow alone. You will remain here; and, by way of blinding the most acute, you will make up the party of which you have often talked, to the waterfall of Coö. Spare no reasonable expense: I will remit you some money from Brussels, and there I shall again draw upon my father to some large amount. Perhaps I may be obliged to go over to England; but I hope you have confidence enough in me to know that under any circumstances I will never desert you. However, we will talk over this to-morrow.’

“That morrow came. In vain Louisa endeavoured to reconcile the parting, even for a day or two, to herself. She felt that she was lost to the world, an outcast from society; and she knew that the instant the bubble report that she was Henry’s wife burst, then she might seek some

retreat farther from England, and endeavour to linger out her life in solitude and prayer. There was a heart-rending scene at parting. On the part of my son, he seemed more wrapped up in himself, his plans, and his determination to obtain money from me. He regarded his mistress as a log of impediment not easily removed. It was at that moment his intention to have left her for ever, and her quick perception discovered it; but she did not tax him with the thought,—she merely implored him to consider what she had done for the love of him, how solely she depended upon his charity and his affection: and as the tears trickled down her beautiful face, she said, ‘I could bear any calamity in life but being separated from you. Oh, Henry, if you could only imagine the dreary hours of expectation which I must while away—if you could only feel the loneliness which now I feel, you would not thus leave me, when my presence could not impede your plans! To your honour I have ceded my own; on that honour I know I can with confidence trust; and as you object to my accompanying you, go, and may Heaven

restore you to me shortly ! My prayers, if a sinner's offering can be acceptable, shall be for you ; and happy beyond all expression of happiness will the hour be that sees you return to me.' "

CHAPTER IV.

THE old gentleman seemed to have recovered his elasticity of spirits from the infusion of some of mine, and he proceeded with his story. The following is the account of that party to Coo, which the old gentleman related to Robert the following morning.

“ The waterfall of Coo is about nine miles distant from Spa, and requires a little patience and perseverance, a strong carriage and rather fat sides, to accomplish the distance without either a fracture of a bone or a break-down of the vehicle. Although in the actual vicinity of this once celebrated and now almost deserted watering-place the inhabitants have done much to attract the stranger by cutting winding paths through the thick trees which encircle the hills; and although they have two Vauxhalls, and a Redouté, in

the latter of which is the gambling and the ball-room, the theatre and a restaurant; yet have they omitted to remember that men are not sheep to be cooped up in a pen and never to wander out of it. Spa may be seen at a glance, and two long walks will show all that civilization has done for the sickly and the idle: it is without any exception the dullest abode that ever I remembered to have selected in all the years of my wandering life.

“ According to all previous plans for a visit to this waterfall, it was settled to dine there; and as Louisa had been instructed to give an ample entertainment in order to blind suspicion, three men were sent forward early in the morning burthened with enough to poison a whole parish. Every mixture which ingenuity could twist into a resemblance to wine, with very good names burnt upon the corks, and very similar to champaign as far as seals, wax, bottles, and colour, were concerned, was packed up and sent; whilst the principal actors,—all of whom, excepting the ladies, had plundered or been concerned in the plunder of Henry at the

gaming-table,—now assisted to lighten his purse by emptying the various bottles and swallowing the numerous good things which the master of the Hôtel de Flandre had selected.

“The party set forward about ten in the morning, and soon left the regular ride which leads to the three spas in the vicinity of the town, to strike into an open country on which the hand of agriculture has never been concerned. Over these hills, which command a fine and extensive view, the party proceeded, enlivened occasionally by the bright sallies of wit of one of the party, and roused into merriment from the incessant dullness of another: in fact, one was the butt, one was the target, at which the sharp arrows of ridicule were directed,—and certainly they never fell thicker or more poisoned than on that day. In vain, however, Louisa endeavoured to hold up the head of cheerfulness; she knew she was surrounded by those whose exuberance of spirits arose from the cause of her depression, and she looked at them with the eye of undisguised distrust. To the ladies she was particularly attentive, although she thought

a kind of distance was observed which previous to the beginning of the party of pleasure was never practised, and she very shortly accounted in her own mind for the change.

“She had observed a young man of my son’s acquaintance, who enjoyed all the luxury of mustachios, and who never belonged to the army, horse or foot, buzzing about from lady to lady, and in low accents communicating something which seemed to attract particular attention. Louisa’s quick eyes soon discovered that she was the object of observation, and it required not the scrutiny of a clever woman to remark that the frequent glances of the ladies were not exactly of that tender sort amounting to pity; in fact, they conveyed an idea of disdain. She needed not to probe her heart to find a reason, yet she well knew that she was herself unknown to the mischief-making swindler, who had almost invited himself to the party, and who now occupied his whole time and ingenuity in making it a failure. The ladies, as opportunities occurred, whispered to each other; some smiled at the intelligence, but

others allowed their pretty faces to be clouded by suspicion. The party was thus spoiled almost before it began ; and certainly, from what did transpire, it was evident that had not curiosity overcome propriety, one half would have returned home without ever reaching the waterfall. With the practised manner of a woman of the world, Louisa pretended not to heed either the whispers or the looks of her company ; but summoning a false cheerfulness she attracted the notice of the hairy-lipped whisperer, and soon enticed him to ride near her ; when she observed suddenly, ‘ that she felt it as a bad compliment that his discourse should have been directed to all of the party to the exclusion of herself, and begged that she might be made a partaker of his wit and his news.’ To this he responded quickly, by asking ‘ if she was ever in Paris ?’

“ Had a thunderbolt fell at her side, it could not have changed her features more. Unprepared for the question, which in itself was nothing, but in the manner of asking the secret, as she imagined only of her own heart, her quickness

of mind was not sufficient to hasten the flow of blood to her face, which remained as pale as the figure of death on horseback. This did not escape either the questioner or the listeners, and, whatever might have been their suspicions they were evidently confirmed. She rallied, however, and replied in the affirmative; when the itinerant vender of scandal rode close to her side, and leaning familiarly towards her horse, fixing his eyes upon his victim, he said in a low voice quite inaudible to the rest, ‘You were *married* in Paris, I believe?’

“Although the young gentleman thought the peculiar stress he had put upon the word *married* would have elicited something confirmatory of his suspicions, he was this time balked; for Louisa, aware of what he might have said, and seeing that the ladies were well within hearing, said out loud, ‘Yes, I *was* married in Paris; and I suppose you have been whispering to your friends that I am a bride. This is ungenerous, Mr. Cavendish, (for that was the name of the mustachioed-monkey) thus to draw the eyes of the party on me when I had so well concealed it

myself. But, as they say the eye of a king or a bride is fortunate, I hope my glance will render you more lucky in your next whisper.'

"Even her own sex were deceived; she uttered the words coolly and collectedly, and in the last few syllables conveyed a cut which even the brazen audacity of this puppy could not withstand. Whilst this was enacting on one side, the cavalcade on the other were convulsed with laughter; but Louisa felt that a blow had been given to her respectability, that sooner or later the bubble would burst, and she be unmasked; and whilst lost in the dreary abode of her own heart, she gave way to the workings of a wounded spirit, and the wit of the one or the remark of another fell without effect upon her ear. From this she was roused by Mr. Cavendish again saying that he thought my son would be longer absent from his *wife* than she thought.

"Alarmed by the mysterious manner of the communication, Louisa imagined ten thousand perfidies on the part of Harry. Her first idea was that he had betrayed her to this wretch who had won his money, and perhaps declared

his intention of never returning to her. In this case all the horrors of her situation presented themselves in quick succession, with an accumulated account at the hotel, a daily increase of it, a reputation whispered away, without a friend in whom to confide, and without money either to redeem herself or reclaim her lover. She felt abused to the lowest grade, and was on the point of committing herself to Mr. Cavendish, and by endeavouring to extract the secret from him, confirm his suspicion. In this, however, she fortunately stumbled at the first attempt; and without any further remark calculated either to restore or excite her usual elasticity of humour: the first view of the waterfall, as they rounded a high and wooded hill, broke upon their sight. The horses were put to their speed, and in a manner more becoming the levity of fourteen than the staid restraint of married females, the whole party aspired to reach the wooden bridge, and stopped their horses close to the waterfall, fearing to attempt the passage of that apparently fragile and dangerous pass.

“No sooner had the party alighted, than a cloud

of beggars, each carrying a dog in his arms, interrupted any remarks which might have escaped. Even Cavendish, as he helped Louisa from her horse, and uttered something in a low hurried tone, stopped short as the clatter of tongues broke loose in supplication for charity. No determination to be uncharitable stopped either their importunities or their solicitations: at last, finding that for the love of Heaven no money was bestowed, they changed their mode and urged charity on behalf of their dogs, which they agreed to throw over the foaming fall, in order to show Christians that death would not follow, although a leg or so might be broken in the descent. The ladies turned their heads away, disgusted at the cruel offer, and mendicancy received a greater check from that society than from the one in Red Lion Square; for women are ever averse to cruelty, at least by nature they are so: some indeed break down the barrier planted for the comfort of their hearts, and seem eager to show their dexterity in skinning cats or eels alive, or crimping the half-expiring fish. That this mode of obtaining money

is common, those who visit that twelve-foot fall of water dignified by the name of cascade, may any day satisfy themselves. Those dogs are preferred which have already grown wise by the constant fracture of their legs: the numerous whirlpools twist the half-drowned brute in rapid circles, whilst the barbarians on the bridge encourage the animal by shouts and cries to persevere to the landing-place. If the animal is thrown exactly in the centre of the fall, he may escape unhurt; but if it is carelessly dropped the least on either side, the sharp-pointed rocks catch the poor devoted creature, the life of which is sacrificed for ten sous, and thus with fractured limbs it either survives to reach once more its cruel owners, or is carried beyond their barbarous reach, and expires in the quick river below.

“ In these parties of pleasure the principal gainers are the priest and his beggars; his house, which stands a little distance from the bridge, is the only one in the parish which is blessed with a shed, under which the horses are placed to be turned half mad by the unrelenting flies.

A kind of shudder at the proposition relative to the dogs had kept the ladies quiet, until they arrived at the house of the padre ; the first remark being made by one of the ladies, that the parish must be larger than met the eye, for the number on the door was 666.

“ ‘The number of the beast,’ replied Mr. Cavendish quickly, ‘and I take it for granted we shall find the prophecy fulfilled.’ Scarcely had he spoken these words, when a short, thin, unshorn, unshaved little follower of divinity appeared: he ushered the party into his miserable abode, which contained no apparent comforts, but which certainly afforded reason to surmise how his reverence got rid of himself and his thoughts. Dozens of empty bottles were standing in various parts of this room ; whilst, protected by lock and key, but visible to the eye, stood the *spiritual* tempter, who, if the breath can confirm suspicion, the little padre had attempted to convert. The room was insufferably close, and dining there was out of the question ; so the party, under the direction of Mr. Cavendish, agreed to dine in a shed belonging to a cow, the property of the padre ; and, after vari-

ous attempts at one Herculean labour, the table was spread on a smooth lawn, which formed the bank of the river just below the fall. And here, surrounded by the high mountains, which spread a long shade over the valley in front, and within hearing of the waterfall, the party sat down to the repast; but, as they occupied the grounds of the padre, and as his presence was actually necessary to keep his pauper parish from breaking through the thin defence of his domains, he was invited, and became one of the number.

“ It was astonishing the power he held over his subjects, for when the savoury viands were spread, and when there appeared sufficient to have satisfied the clamorous mouths of the fifty or sixty who stretched their eager necks over the palings, the excited feelings of the paupers alarmed the party in regard to the security of their goods; but directly the padre held up his finger, and uttered two words, the whole mob crossed themselves, and sat down on a small rising ground watching their prey. It might have reminded one of the greedy Cossacks of Platof, who, during the retreat of the French army from Moscow,

perched themselves upon the heights which surrounded their victims, and dashed upon every straggler from those unfortunate but heroic battalions.

“That the party was a failure, was evident enough; and, in spite of the quickness of Mr. Cavendish, the folly of Mr. Henderson, or the peculiarity of the padre, a gloom had settled itself upon the ladies. In vain Louisa endeavoured to arouse them and herself; her words were coldly received, and at every glance of Mr. Cavendish, who seemed by his manner of behaviour to know she was within his grasp, her efforts grew gradually weaker and weaker, and ultimately entirely failed. The business of eating being finished, the ladies retired to stroll by the side of this lovely river; and, instead of forming a kind of mass without regularity, each seemed anxious to secure the arm of her friend, and Louisa was left to walk by herself. It was then the full force of her situation occurred to her; she saw it all, it needed no conjuror to drop the scales from her eyes. She was unmasked; or, what was as bad, suspected. She sat down by that

babbling stream, as if to seek consolation in its noise, or wishing that the loud voice of conscience—for hers was not that small still voice, it was trumpet-tongued—might be drowned in the mass of water which roared over the cleft hill. She turned in her mind the conduct to be pursued ; the party had wandered some little distance, and had intimated their hostility by sitting down beyond the reach of her voice. That Cavendish was in possession of the secret, she could not doubt : either he had seen her when her character was sacred in some of the gay balls of the French metropolis, and had heard of her elopement with one who had never changed her name ; or, in the riot of debauchery, when the sentinel of discretion is drunk, her, — she could not say husband,—her, she trembled when she uttered *protector*,—had betrayed the secret. There she sat a Niobe in tears, the loveliest of those by whom she was deserted ; a creature formed for admiration, for desire, for society ; and now almost visibly a despised, an insulted wanton.

“ To face the storm, she found herself unable ; to dissimulate, she was incapable ; to force herself

upon her company, she had too high a spirit. Fallen as she was, and in her own estimation irrevocably ruined, and utterly despised as she felt, still the spirit of her birth was not quelled; and, in the emergency of the case, she decided upon resenting the injury she had sustained in the evident estrangement of her society. Long, long she pondered upon her dreadful situation: even hope that Henry would perform the last act of justice towards her, failed to support her flagging spirits; but revenge for the insult her own sex had heaped upon her, by the whisperings of so insignificant a creature as Mr. Cavendish, armed her afresh for the combat, and infused a spirit which only revenge in an insulted woman could infuse.

“In the mean time the gentlemen were very busy in rendering the padre a subject for ridicule by his own parishioners; the little man, who at first was shy and reserved, seemed to gain confidence when the ladies left the table; from abstinence he swerved towards the bottle, and began, one would have supposed, to lay in a stock for a fortnight. Soon it operated, and

soon began to appear one of the most disgusting sights with which men can be afflicted. To see the man who on the Sabbath pours into the eager ears of his congregation the glad tidings of salvation, to see him who preaches the necessity of virtue, and who is eloquent in exhorting his congregation to be sober and diligent, give the lie to his own words in the house of God, by basely profaning his character by drunkenness, is horrible; to drown the light of reason, to hush the eloquent voice, to obliterate memory even of himself and his Maker, are crimes doubly aggravated when the hypocrite dares in the church to point out that way which he is weak enough to refuse to follow himself. To wine succeeded brandy: that dirty abomination, snuff, choked his utterance; his eyes seemed on fire; and even decency was forgotten when this little spectre of divinity, this shadow of a churchman, gave way to his political opinions, and sung songs of revolution and of riot within the hearing of his parishioners. Then came all the devil of his composition, 'the love of money.' One of the party, authorised by Louisa to pay his demand,

which could hardly have amounted to three francs, was astonished to find the intoxicated padre a cheat as well as a drunkard ; he required thirty francs ; and so infuriated did he become at the hints that his charges were exorbitant, that he nearly added insult to injury, and threatened to detain the glasses, &c. until he was compensated. It was paid ; and no sooner had he counted the money, than, reeling from the shed, he called his hungry paupers, and pointing out the food still left, gave them permission to enter his grounds. Then came a visitation of real harpies ; in vain the *commissionaires* belonging to the hotel opposed this irruption of the enemy ; they broke through the slender defence, seized and bore off their plunder in spite of the words and the blows of the servants ; the padre staggered home, and, throwing himself upon his head, left the company to depart.

“It was now nearly eight o’clock ; the day had been intensely hot, and Louisa, overcome by the heat and her situation, felt the first cooling breeze which started from the adjacent hills. She lifted her eyes towards the point from which the wind came, and then first

observed the party mounted and riding homewards. She started up, and gathering the folds of her habit, hastened to her horse; all were gone but two, one her own, and one belonging to Cavendish; by this time the cavalcade had turned the corner, and were out of sight. All her feelings of revenge were hushed in the critical situation in which she found herself; to start alone was impossible. Cavendish was nowhere to be found, the servants were busy in defending their master's property, and the ragged children left to pick up the offerings of drunken liberality, remained by the two horses; they were too weak to assist her, and the horses too riotous to mount without aid. She looked round for her worst foe, he was not visible; but her eye caught at a distant turn of the road her party at a full gallop, and she distinctly saw some of the ladies look behind, as if fearful of her approach. She now began to weigh in her mind if this could be a premeditated scheme; but even this insulted creature could not credit that her sex would so desert her without some further proof than that adduced by this stranger to her.

“To avoid the importunities of the beggars, she betook herself to the priest’s parlour, which opened into his bed-chamber: there lay and snored in drunken forgetfulness that hypocritical preacher; a man endowed with various talents, with an eloquence hardly rivalled, with knowledge deep and profound; a victim to that passion he could not control, a living lie upon his own advice, a man who pointed out the forbidden fruit, and who was the first to pluck it. She shut the door, and sat down: how often, how very often she looked at the watch, the only remnant, besides a ring she was not privileged to wear, left by her seducer! Even as she marked, the hours slipped rapidly away; her thoughts wandered after him she loved; and in the pleasure derived in retracing scenes of affection, the time cheated her in its flight, and the shades of evening, now casting the lengthened shadow over the village, recalled her to her situation. The horses still remained, held by an old man; the servant from Spa had gathered up the remnants of the feast rescued from the beggars; the crowd had, being satiated with plunder, re-

tired ; and Louisa heard only the distant lowing of the cattle, and now and then the hasty pawing of the horses.

“ The evening growing towards night, was still and calm : she remembered that it would require two hours by daylight, even at a good speed, to reach Spa ; that there was no moon ; and that even now, if she mounted, it would be midnight before she could reach her hotel. Then came the apprehension that her character, soon to be talked away by the female babblers, would not be exalted by a dark ride through a strange country, over hills, where houses did not exist, where the road was difficult to find by broad daylight, and where it was actually dangerous to cross, from the numerous pitfalls and inequalities. The wide romantic scene the noon-day's sun had rendered magnificent, was now an object of terror. The shades of night were fast approaching ; the servant of the padre eyed her with suspicion ; and when she found that the officious menial would insist upon calling the padre, she took the desperate resolution of mounting by any means, and endeavouring by the sagacity

of the horse to find her way home. She succeeded ; and had crossed the bridge before mentioned, and on the smooth road was urging her horse forward, when the clattering of Cavendish's horse convinced her that he had carefully concealed himself in order to ensure his prey. The road, which is good near the village of Coo, soon becomes rocky, ill-formed, and shaded by continual nut-trees. These thick-foliaged plants would even by moonlight have rendered the ride hazardous ; but now, with a darkness which Louisa thought more intense than natural, it became positively requisite to allow the animals to walk their own pace, and pick their own way.

“ ‘Your most obedient servant, Louisa Stanhope,’ began Cavendish, as he forced his horse close to her side. ‘I thought we should have an hour’s quiet conversation, and I see you are equally disposed, or we should not be here this dark night.’

“ ‘Louisa, at once convinced that all was known, remained silent.

“ ‘Come come, my truant bird, we must be better acquainted ; as yet you only know me as it

were by accident ; but the time is come when you must regard me with a more friendly eye, for I have news to tell you with which you are unacquainted. I know that marriage-ring, which you so cautiously exhibit, has no right upon that finger, and that——’

“ ‘For Heaven’s sake ! Mr. Cavendish,’ interrupted Louisa, ‘stop ! I am not able to bear this insult ; and I wonder that you, who call yourself a man, should have selected this moment, when an unprotected female should be sacred in your eyes, to insult and revile her.’

“ ‘I neither insult nor revile you,’ continued Cavendish ; ‘if that precious bauble virtue, which you have thrown from your casket, was still in your keeping, I would not speak as I intend to do ; but you are the world’s property now, your own sex forsake you, and you may seek consolation amongst those who neither boast of virtue nor propriety, or throw yourself into the arms of any man who is kind enough to outstretch them for your protection.’

“ Cavendish, although a young man, was a most consummate villain in his heart : it appears that

he had oftentimes seen Louisa, and had been equally anxious to inquire her history ; on the Continent this is more common than in a casual meeting in our own country. He himself was handsome, of a manly figure, a commanding countenance ; but with an eye that, when fixed by another, wavered and uncovered his heart,—the eye is the index of that. It is said, no animal can face the steady glance of the courageous, virtuous human eye ; and Louisa knew that although she had an enemy by her side, she had a coward for her foe. Cavendish had, during his many gambling transactions with Henry, by little and little, extracted her history ; and the night previous to his departure, when the last turn of fortune decided in favour of Cavendish, and when he, in the cowardly exultation over his fleeced friend, recommended him, as it was late, to go to bed with his pretty wife, and forget such a trifling loss, Henry, in a moment of spleen, exclaimed, ‘She is not my wife, thank God ! and I can be rid of her and the incumbrance to-morrow.’ Startled at this, Cavendish continued the question, when the half-inebriated

gambler proclaimed her as ‘*Louisa Stanhope*,’ the victim of his successful seduction.

“The party at *Coo* coming immediately upon this discovery, the sudden departure of *Harry*, and the knowledge of his severe losses, determined *Cavendish* to effect his purpose. *Cunning* to a word, clever by nature, and calm and collected, he considered her honour now in his hands, and immediately determined to unmask her before the company, to estrange the females from *Louisa*; and although he never imagined that fortune would throw her so soon in his power, yet he actually had planned, had laid the very trap into which the unsuspecting *Louisa* had fallen. He had persuaded the party to decamp, and had promised one over-zealous lady to keep *Louisa* in the rear, so that her pious ears might not be profaned by hearing even the sound of her fallen sister’s voice.

“In every woe, with the exception of this one, to which in this miserable life we are subjected, the female breast participates in the misery of the sufferer; the heart which would bleed over the misfortune of unexpected losses, the death

of friends or relations, or could compassionate the minor evils of our existence, stands unmoved to the cry of pity from an abandoned female. Instead of providing for their wants, and winning them back to the path from which they have swerved, they spurn them to degradation, and force them to continue, by the exclusion they practise, in that road of ruin, until their healths are impaired, their spirits broken, their hearts hardened, and their guilt confirmed. In vain they lift the supplicating voice; they are discarded as worthless, and reviled as strumpets.

“The gamester and the drunkard, are they not as bad as the profligate woman? Does not the former not only bring misery on himself, but on all those dependent upon him? Does not he fly from one excitement, if possible, to a worse? Is not his means of subsistence the plunder of others? Is he not vicious, low, degraded, oftentimes a forger, and mostly a swindler?

“Who can rely upon the drunkard? Is he fit to undertake any service? Will he not squander his own and the wealth of others to drive

himself into forgetfulness? Is the house in which he sleeps secure from fire? or in the sea-man, is the ship safe from explosion? How many lives may he not sacrifice by his intemperance; and yet we neither hold the gambler as an exile from society, nor the drunkard from the warmth of our fires. We compassionate their errors, we pity their infirmities; but we admit them in our company, and oftentimes enrol them as our friends. Let those beware of such acquaintances who follow the steps of a Cavendish, or the ruin of a Harry."

CHAPTER V.

“IT was Cavendish’s idea that by suddenly convincing Louisa of her secret, beating her down to the lowest despair, and then slowly proposing in kind terms a remedy, that he might succeed in turning her affections from Harry and gain them for himself; not that he had the slightest idea of protecting her afterwards, he was not generous enough in his disposition to shelter the woman he had ruined; sufficient was it for him to have her in his power, to rob the girl of the little peace of mind which remained, and then allow her to find a refuge where and how she could.

“Some small distance beyond the village of Coo the road again becomes comparatively good, and in this part Louisa advanced at a safe canter: she was anxious to near her home, but she

forgot that each pace of the horse conveyed her further from any habitation ; for, after winding through this straggle of huts and houses, the road leads over the before-mentioned hills, on the summit of one of which a solitary house still stands. Cavendish was close at her side : in vain she actually tried a gallop ; his horse was the fleetest, besides which he was a bolder rider, and a man has a great advantage from his seat, especially when the road is bad, and the horse requires support. To evade him, to distance him, was impossible ; and, had she succeeded, she never could have found the road, difficult by daylight, and almost hazardous in darkness. During the accelerated pace, Louisa had wound herself up to face the storm ; and when they emerged from the lane, and began to ascend the hill, the horses seemed to know the necessity of a slower pace, and dwindled into a walk. Cavendish had wound his coward bosom to a resolution which in daylight he would have hesitated to have attempted. The flash of the woman's eyes were imperceptible : it was like a timid man writing a letter in his own sanctum, in which he dared to give vent to

his feelings in the absence of his enemy ; for many men will hector in security, and, when the eye is withdrawn, the heart may be re-assured.

“ ‘ Are you convinced, Louisa,’ said Cavendish, ‘ that I know more than you suspected ; and that, in spite of your calm assertion this morning, know you to be, not the wife, but the mistress of Harry.’ ”

“ ‘ You have asserted as much, Mr. Cavendish, and if true or not I shall not condescend to answer ; but I cannot but regret that, independent of the insult offered to me, you should have whispered away my character, and thus left me under the protection of a man who has ruined my reputation, and who has driven away by his slanderous tongue those of my own sex who were my proper companions.’ ”

“ ‘ *It is never a blot until it’s hit*, as the backgammon players say : you were believed virtuous,—they liked you ; you are found under false colours,—they desert, perhaps despise you.’ ”

“ ‘ And pray, sir,’ replied Louisa, ‘ by whose authority do you circulate these rumours.’ ”

“ ‘ Harry’s.’ ”

“ ‘ Good God above ! it cannot be ; you are endeavouring in the absence of this man to insult his wife : never would I believe the basest of men could descend so low ; it is false, utterly false ; he never asserted what you assert, he never whispered what you have whispered.’ ”

“ ‘ You women are remarkably foolish, my dear Louisa : let a little reason penetrate through the darkness even of this night ; you must know that I was ignorant of this two days ago, or you would have seen more of me, rely upon it. It was when he resolved to leave you that he betrayed the secret ; he has no more money, he is off, he has shaken the clog from his leg, your landlord will become clamorous for his bill yet unpaid : to-morrow will see you a different creature to the once courted, once *innocent* lady ; his flight I have already circulated ; his return I know improbable, if not impossible, and therefore, my pretty bird, caught in your own lure, I would recommend your turning your eyes upon one who has money enough to support you, and who in compassion for your distress will shelter you.’ ”

“ The indignation of Louisa knew no bounds : attached, fondly attached to the man who had ruined her—perfectly incredulous as to the assertions of Cavendish, and yet knowing their truth, she knew not how to answer, for her wrath was kindled, her reason half estranged, and from the latter part of his speech she saw clearly his intentions and the increasing danger of her situation : still she was woman enough to temporize ; and swallowing that anger which at first nearly choked her utterance, she rather calmly replied, ‘ When I am convinced of the truth of your assertions, Mr. Cavendish, I may be more inclined to listen to your propositions ; but I feel easy under that promise, knowing who and what I am. Next Saturday, Harry shall revenge the insult offered to his wife ; and if I were his mistress, he would be under a double obligation to protect me from the ruffian assault of a stranger.’ ”

“ ‘ I feel rather easy upon that point, Louisa : I tell you, for the last time, that he himself told me—yes, *me*—that you were not his wife, and that he would soon be clear of the incumbrance. Why, he likened you to a load, a burthen, a

heavy disagreeable weight he had fixed upon his own shoulders, and from under which he was resolved to slip. I really wonder that you, so young, so beautiful, so full of life and animation, want the spirit of your sex to despise a man who has so cruelly deserted you.'

" ' And one who has so cruelly traduced me !'

" ' Nay, nay, my dear girl, be reasonable. I love you, and therefore feel a warm interest in your welfare ; I love you, Louisa,—(saying which, he took her hand, which was resting on the pommel, and which she hastily withdrew,)—before we part this night, that hand will not be so savagely withdrawn : let me show you your situation, and you can best judge if I heighten the colouring of the picture. Harry is ruined, he has not a farthing : in the excitement of his loss, he has confessed himself happy—yes, child, happy—that he was not clogged by matrimony ; and even in madness he had some reason, for he said a man was never thoroughly ruined until he *was* married : he rejoiced in publishing your shame ; not only myself, but six other men were present : he held you up to public obloquy,

public scorn ; he confessed his bill unpaid at the hotel, and his inability to pay it ; he spoke of your jewels as too good, too real, to adorn a mistress ; and in the bitterness of his loss he derived comfort, not from your affection or your charms, but because he could cast you aside, like the loathsome weed carried by the Gulf stream, to float upon the public ocean until that ocean destroyed it. Where now are the feelings which warm the female heart ? Have you no spirit, no courage, no scorn for such a worthless fellow ; who, having plucked the ripe fruit, leaves it to rot on the ground ? Nay, I will make you convinced that I speak the truth : no sooner had he mentioned your *proper* name, than one of the party remembered you at Paris, recollected you as Louisa Stanhope ; nay, he had seen the whole account of your elopement in the papers.’

“ A long deep sigh escaped Louisa. At this moment, when in all its naked truth, the story was told, her feelings were beyond description ; she saw at once the probability of his desertion, but the jewels, too pure to grace a wanton’s neck, stung her to the very heart : in vain she en-

deavoured to mask his behaviour ; the whole was too connected, not one link in the chain was wanting. Then did she feel the devil rising in her bosom, and overawing the guilt that rankled therein ; she could not discredit that which she knew to be true, and which could only have been known by the mean babbling of her lover's tongue.

“ ‘ Rather exult than sigh,’ continued Caven-
dish ; ‘ for that dark cloud which threatens us with its thunder is not more charged with danger than is your situation : to-morrow you will be an outcast ; this late ride with one scarcely known to you, the grief to which you will give vent, the shame which you must feel and cannot conceal, will all tend to confirm the truth, and to place me in public estimation as your protector. If this cloud burst over us and swell the fords near the road, we may be detained until daylight ; and what then will be the surmise when, with jaded horses, bespattered habit, weeping eyes, you creep into your room and find your officious maid ready to note every spot or stain ? Reflect well upon this, and re-

member it is but the overture to the serious opera, which the whole scandal will develope. Again, Louisa, I love you ; I offer you my house, my home, my fortune : and had I not been so overpowered by your beauty as to confess myself your admirer, I had not planned this meeting, and which fortune has so kindly afforded me.'

“ ‘ And to this meeting then I am indebted for my ruin. If, Mr. Cavendish, that cloud to which you have alluded were to arm me with all the terrors of its lightning, on your head should fall the bolt: hear this from one who through life has only told one falsehood ; I hate you, despise you, and would rather fall a prey to the midnight ruffian, than yield to one to whom I am indebted for all the misfortunes I feel about to crush me.'

“ ‘ Not so, Louisa.'

“ ‘ Sir, I beg that freedom may be discontinued. I place myself now under your protection, but our acquaintance ceases with our arrival ; your well-told story of dirt and marks, my innocence—the plain unvarnished tale—will shield me from ; and now, even now, you are

willing to add another falsehood to your declaration of love. Did you not swindle Harry of his money? Did you not receive that which has ruined us? Have you not circulated those reports which life is too short to obliterate? Have you not driven Harry from my arms, and my sex from my society?’

“ ‘ You are rash, Louisa, dearest Louisa, in your expressions; you are now in my power, and I might avail myself of the hint so kindly given in the midnight ruffian. I have acted as a friend, I have shown you your danger, and I have offered you an escape :—keep your horse nearer mine, or you will be in a gravel-pit. Remember this,—that he who is branded as a swindler, as a liar, as a villain, may as well add a *cause* for another opprobrious term.’

“ ‘ You cannot mean to use violence, Mr. Cavendish; the very Heavens will protect the innocent. I cannot believe you even capable of such wickedness—such cowardice.’

“ ‘ Louisa, I have resolved that you shall love me: nay, regard me as your best friend: and not the thunder of the heavens shall turn me from

my resolution. Consent then to relinquish the man who scorns you, and give me the hand which you have so lavishly bestowed upon a worthless villain.'

" ' Unhand me, Mr. Cavendish, or my screams shall startle the neighbourhood: unhand me, sir directly, and learn that respect which is due to a woman.'

" ' By Heavens ! I cannot part with you ; scream if you will : even this solemn calm before the storm will not convey your screams to human ear. Here is a wild and rugged hill to which none repair but during daylight ; no shepherd brings his flock to this ungenerous soil : and here, stop your horse ;—here I will exact from you a promise to be mine, to forget the man who has so scandalously ill-used you, and to live with him who has ruined in order to secure you.'

" The shriek with which the poor girl screamed for assistance was re-echoed, in the stillness of the night, from hill to hill, as if to summon all to her aid : that loud piercing shrill voice was unheard. Cavendish, frightened from his purpose,

relinquished her hand, and Louisa dashed her horse forward.

“Those who have resided at Spa are well aware how frequently, how almost instantaneously, the storms arise. Attracted by the many mountains in the vicinity, the clouds collect upon their summit, and require but the first flash of lightning to inundate the plains below. But on this night slowly had the clouds collected ; by degrees they began to extend themselves ; and the night, dark before, was perfectly black in the direction from which the impending storm was to come : it hung like a pall over the benighted travellers ; and often did Louisa implore its downfall, in order to scare the villain from his destined prey. Aloft, the wind was plainly audible ; it seemed to follow the scream, as if anything which disturbed the stillness would bring on the tempest. The horse, fearful of its footing, again relaxed into a walk, and moved its ears backwards and forwards as if catching the sound of the wind, which became louder and louder, although not a breath disturbed the lower atmosphere.

“ Cavendish was again by her side, again eager to be heard ; and now with soft and kind words endeavouring to persuade his victim to renounce her still loved Harry : but Louisa never deigned a reply ; as he sank to solicitations, she rose in courage ; she suspected him as a coward, and she hated, she despised him.

“ ‘ I see,’ he resumed, ‘ it is all in vain. I had hoped that your knowledge of the dreadful predicament in which you stand, and my kind intentions, might have procured for me a more ready ear and a more generous auditor. Surely you cannot be blind to your situation ; your forlorn, your helpless condition, prompts me again and again to offer my protection.’

“ ‘ Never, sir, never ; as there is a God in heaven—never will I consent to such baseness !’

“ ‘ Then by that heaven your ruin is inevitable ! To whom, dearest Louisa, can you turn ? Where can the despised and degraded find a friend in affliction ? Is it not evident that your own sex have abandoned you ? And where, when the determined landlord presses his bill,—where can you find the means to satisfy his just demand ?

Look, therefore, to me as your protector; and your generosity shall be repaid by my undeviating affection.' Here Cavendish dismounted, and placing his hand through the bridle of Louisa's horse stopped it, and with the look of a lover again urged his suit in more respectful terms.

" 'Tis useless,' Cavendish continued, 'tis useless your refusal, Louisa: look well, first to your own state, then to mine; nay, do not be wilfully blind. You see in the abandonment of Harry only more affluence would accrue to you: he is ruined, he has not a farthing; nay, dearest girl, has he not insulted you beyond endurance, in stigmatising you as a wanton, on whose neck the emblem of innocence, the pearl of purity was contaminated? Has he not branded you with infamy?—and has he not, at the very moment when his assistance was most needed, deserted you—left you at a public hotel, having previously published your dishonour? Come, come, I know it is hard to give up those we love, and I feel that truth now; but it amounts to madness in a woman to cling to the being who cast her from him, and who is so

pitifully mean that he is not contented with having rifled the flower, but he must throw the stalk away.'

“ Louisa sighed heavily ; and Cavendish, aware that women do not sigh without a cause, took her hand as he walked by the side of her horse, allowing his own to follow at the bridle's length, and thus artfully continued,—‘ Excuse me, dearest girl, if in showing you your danger I have used words which ill accord with your wishes, or perhaps your belief ; but it is a duty I owe to beauty,—and surely never was that duty more fairly commanded, if loveliness can command,—to shield it from insult. You think I have used you ill in severing your companions from you : I have done you a service if you will avail yourself of it ; for now, as you know your danger, you can escape from it before even the female tongue can babble your disgrace. Poor dear helpless beauty, it is hard so young to be so sacrificed ; and I should ill become the name of a man if I did not participate in your afflictions, and use my utmost endeavours to shelter and to shield you.’

“At this moment, a vivid flash of lightning seemed to dart within an inch of the horses; the thunder followed in a loud terrific roar. Louisa’s horse shied to the left, its hoof striking full upon the foot of Cavendish; and, turning sharp round fell into a pit, forcing Cavendish before it, and dismounting its rider: the other horse turned its head from the storm, whilst the clouds discharged their contents in such torrents that a second Deluge seemed at hand. Neither were much hurt, but the pain experienced from the hoof of the animal checked the mellifluous accent of Cavendish.

“Louisa availed herself of this sudden and unexpected delivery to deceive her unworthy companion. ‘See, Mr. Cavendish, the Heavens on which I called have interposed to save me; and this, I hope, will lead you to think more of our mutual safety than of your present wishes? How are we ever to find our way in this dreadful night without we take advantage of the lightning, by which means we may discover the solitary house which stands not far from the summit of the hill? Let us mount our horses before the

animals become more frightened, and perhaps, unable to stand the storm, may gallop away. I hope you are not hurt, sir ?

“ Cavendish recovering from his fall, was walking round and round, limping seriously, and muttering curses both loud and deep: to the question of Louisa he answered with a mild voice, ‘ Think not of me, dearest Louisa ; if you are unhurt, I care not for this trivial pain : I grieve to say, that although I can walk, I can offer but little assistance in placing you on your saddle ; but let me try ;’ and, saying this, he placed his hand covered with mud round the waist of Louisa. She released herself instantly, saying,

“ ‘ Then I must do the best I can by myself ;’ and, taking the bridle, she led the horse to the beaten track, and finding a small hillock she succeeded in leaping on her saddle, whilst Cavendish officiously endeavoured to be of some trivial service. He took her hand, and respectfully kissed it as he continued, ‘ I trust, Louisa, my respectful manner will convince you that you have not fallen into the hands of a ruffian. I hope you

will see in me one whose admiration of you is founded in love; and who would willingly repair, if the love was mutual, the injury you have sustained at the hands of Harry. Before I mount my horse, and whilst the thunder may witness the promise, let me implore you to give me some hope that my affections are not misplaced, and that you will leave Spa to-morrow under the protection of the man who will traverse the world to seek the spot on which his dear Louisa may wish to reside; and he—' he continued, as he kissed her hand,—' he will not desert the woman who returns his love, or blazon her shame in the eyes of the curious world.'

" ' Mr. Cavendish,' replied Louisa, ' you must admit my right to doubt all your assertions; but if what you have said of Harry's baseness is true, if he does not return to me before next Wednesday, I will become yours if you discontinue your importunities now; and let this promise suffice for the present: although he has used me badly,—nay, I could find another word,—yet I would not desert him until he has cast me away. Now mount your horse, and let us liberate ourselves from our present difficulties.'

“Cavendish again kissed her hand, and thanking her for the prospect she afforded him of convincing her of his sincerity, he mounted his horse. His determination had been very different ; but now he held the balance between the quiet possession on Wednesday, or the hazard of the consequences should he persevere. He was confident Harry would never return ; and therefore, after binding Louisa by a promise the most sacred—nay, making her seal the contract by kissing him, they proceeded onwards, Cavendish holding the hand of Louisa, which she never attempted to withdraw : ‘ I know not, my dearest Louisa, what is best to be done : this rain will render the fords impassable ; and the roads, hazardous at all times, will now become dangerous. Shall we make for the lone house, and there wait until daylight? ’

“ ‘ No, no,’ replied Louisa, who was resolved not to trust herself longer with Cavendish than was actually necessary ; ‘ we are drenched to the skin, and covered with mud ; the sooner we gain the hotel the better ; and I would not for the world arrive by daylight. It is now only midnight,

and we have passed the worst road : there stands the house ; we must take the road to the left, and follow the lanes : we cannot now miss our way.'

“ ‘ You remember your promise, Louisa—start not at my again mentioning it—we are both bound by the same bond, I not to molest you now, and you to be mine on Wednesday. I told you, before the night was over this hand would not be withdrawn, and I am no false prophet.'

“ ‘ What I have said I have said,' replied Louisa.

“ ‘ Now then,' resumed Cavendish, ‘ let us endeavour to undo the mischief I have already done ; to-morrow, or rather to-day, will bring forward your clamorous creditors ; allow me to be your banker and pay all your bills—I will call about noon. We must now be upon terms of the strictest friendship ; you must appear left under my protection, and I will endeavour to persuade your female friends that I was mistaken. Do not dine in public, but I will be your companion in your room.'

“ ‘ As you direct, so I shall do, Mr. Cavendish ;

but perhaps the landlord may not be clamorous, in which case I see no necessity of borrowing from your kindness.'

" 'The greatest in the world, darling : your offer to pay your account will give the lie to my own whispers ; your having money will insure you respect : and next Wednesday we will remove to Liege.'

" ' If Harry does not return,' interrupted Louisa.

" ' I fear your sincerity even now, Louisa. How can you cling to such a shadow ? How can you still love the man who has ruined your reputation, left you a pauper, and who now is either half way to Paris or London ?'

" ' He left his wife, his own wife for me—nay, occasioned her death after being married only seven months,' sighed Louisa, ' and therefore would not hesitate in deserting me when a fresh object attracted his attention. Ah, Mr. Cavendish, it is the knowledge of this very fact I have mentioned, that he left his wife for me,—ay, and that it killed her,—that has bound me to him."

“ ‘ Hah ! hah ! hah ! ’ laughed Cavendish ; ‘ what fools you women are ! Why you confess it then, you acknowledge yourself his mistress ! ’

“ ‘ And have you not told me so yourself ? ’ replied the astonished girl ; ‘ have you not mentioned the circumstances so minutely that I could not be deceived ? ’

“ ‘ Good ! by the Lord, good ! He said so in a fit of spleen, but nobody believed him ; and the story about the papers was my own invention.’

“ Louisa withdrew her hand, and Cavendish instantly stopped the horse : the storm had passed, the calm had succeeded, and the moon had risen : he looked her in the face with the consciousness of power, and, seizing her again, said, ‘ Either your hand, or your *honour* ! ’ She gave it trembling as it was ; and Cavendish mistook for fear that which arose from scorn, or the sensation of touching a viper. Now the villain became a bold man, now he held her firmly in his power ; the truth, which he certainly never believed before, was now confirmed, and his manner changed from the vacil-

lating lover to the imperative master. Her story was easily to be confirmed ; he had her firmly in the web, and his revenge was certain. He hated Harry for the word ‘coward’ which had been directed at him by his victim ; he *had* taken his money, he *had* cheated him of that, and now he would rob him of his mistress.”

CHAPTER VI.

“IT was not before three o’clock on Thursday morning that Cavendish and his victim arrived at Spa. The busy hum of men was hushed in repose, and they alighted at the Hôtel de Flandre without being noticed; the man to whom the horses belonged was aroused by the tread of the animals, and, opening the great gates of the courtyard, admitted the tired and jaded creatures. Cavendish assisted Louisa to dismount, and would have saluted her on parting had she not withdrawn herself; and without offering her hand, she coldly repeated, ‘good night,’ and retired to her own room. The maid startled at seeing her mistress in such a disordered state: her eyes seemed swollen from tears, her hair hung in long locks from which the moisture was still dropping—her riding-hat was indented in front, her habit was

covered with mud, and, in the only place which might have defied the dirt, was the strong print of a hand. The other party, some of whom lived in the same hotel, had returned by ten o'clock ; and it certainly did appear very strange to the strong intellect of the waiting and inquisitive servant, that all the ladies should have so suddenly deserted her mistress, and left her to the protection of a stranger on a dark night over a barren country. The many questions put to her mistress were answered in one answer, and unfortunately she blended a falsehood with the truth.

“ ‘She had,’ she replied, ‘left the waterfall with the rest of the party ; but in riding over the hill the horse had shied and she been thrown, and that a Mr. Cavendish, as she was rather hurt, had advised the rest to ride forward to avoid the impending storm, whilst he would remain and walk by her side until she reached home : the rain had so swollen the river that they could not pass, and thus she had been detained until this late hour.’ ”

“ ‘Why ma’am,’ replied the inquisitive maid, ‘you must have been thrown *after* the storm began, for the habit is covered with mud ; and dear

me, why here is the mark of a hand round your waist—I suppose you rode home.’

“Louisa saw the error she had committed, and her maid was too quick not to perceive the change in her mistress’s manner; as when those garments were removed, which we who relate the anecdote hardly know by name, no contusion was visible, no marks in black array confirmed the statement, no sore inflamed the skin, no blood oozed from any wound. She had walked up stairs firmly and well; and if she had been so injured as to be five hours behind her company in a distance of only nine miles in all, some mark would have been left to attest the truth, some expression of pain would have escaped, some liniment would have been offered, and some friction desired: but, instead of this, deep, deep sighs escaped her; her eyes streamed with tears, her whole manner was hurried and confused. ‘I am afraid, ma’am,’ continued the maid, ‘you are very much hurt; can I get anything for you to relieve the pain: is it your back, ma’am, or your arms.’

“‘Never mind, Mary, I shall be better to-

morrow ; do leave me. I will put my hair in paper. You must be very tired ; good night, and don't let anybody disturb me in the morning. There go, that 's a good creature, for I feel very tired, and cannot talk.' The servant retired.

“ It was said by a great and good man, that every night, when he retired to rest, he passed before him every word he had uttered, every action he had committed, every sentence he had read ;—thus he habituated himself to stand in judgment on his conduct : and whilst he censured the slightest levity, and prayed for forgiveness, he congratulated himself, and thus received his reward, for the good he had done, the learning he had acquired, the virtue he had practised, and the forgiveness he had extended. That this is a wholesome, useful watchfulness over ourselves is evident ; and if repentance is the first step towards forgiveness, self-examination is the shield from crime.

“ Sleep, that blessing ‘ which covereth a man all over like a blanket,’ came not to cover the approaches of horror : conscience, the busy sentinel over virtue, searched in vain for its charge,

and reproached its inattention by reminding the once proprietor of its loss. How changed was all around her!—no longer the fascinating Louisa would be the pride or the envy of her acquaintance, no longer would the world court her society: her own breast was her accuser, and her sighs, her tears, her own absent, distracted manner, would become the principal evidence against her. In vain she endeavoured to reassure herself; when people have once lost their own esteem, all the words and all the works of the world can never restore it. She turned, and turned in her mind the proper course to be pursued; and finally resolved upon declaring herself too indisposed to quit her chamber, to exclude every one but her own maid, and to give the most positive orders that Mr. Cavendish should not be admitted. If Harry intended to return, twenty-four hours would not elapse without a letter: if not, she resolved to state her situation to her landlord; leave all her clothes, &c. in his care; borrow sufficient money to convey her to Paris; and, like the houseless stranger, beg admission at that door from which she had eloped, and which was now closed against her.

With these determinations she became more quiet : she saw it was useless to cower at a danger from which she could not escape ; and equally impolitic would it have been to have put on the face of assurance, when her female friends had united against her, and pretty plainly demonstrated the course they intended to pursue.

“ Daylight dawned, the usual hour of rising came, —and noon appeared ; her maid had obeyed her orders, and had devoted her morning to the laudable exercise of her inquisitorial talents. She had elicited from the *commissionaires* the certainty that her mistress did not leave the waterfall with the rest of the company, and she was not slow in observing that although she had met one or two of the ladies themselves, yet that no inquiries were made concerning her mistress, or of the injury she might have sustained by her fall. She knew that this was unusual in civilized society, and she very soon came to the conclusion that her mistress was no better than she ought to be. Mary was a rather hard-featured woman, of about four-and-twenty, and joined to a face none the better for the attack of small-pox

a violent irascibility of temper, one of the seven failings which the Genius of Hindoostan has fixed as the natural composition of women. She, having put that and that together, nodded her head suspiciously, and resolved to remain in her room until she was called.

“In the Hôtel de Flandre there are two staircases: one close to the entrance into the courtyard, and which no one can ascend without observation from the secretary, or some of the servants; the other exactly facing the front door, up or down which a dozen strangers might play at leap-frog without a chance of discovery. They both lead to a passage, on one side of which are the sitting, and on the other the bed-rooms; and, as many occupy both this floor and the next, any intruder might roam about without being liable to suspicion, or without being regarded as an interloper.

“It was noon, when a slight tap at the door awoke Louisa from her unquiet slumbers; and as it was evidently broad day, for the curtains are too thin to exclude the light, and the shutters rarely used but in winter, she concluded it must

be her servant, and without further hesitation she pronounced ‘Come in,’ quite audibly enough to convince the forward Mr. Cavendish that he had made no mistake in the room, for he had squinted into the different chambers, the open doors of which invited his peeping propensities; and being thoroughly satisfied that Louisa had not ventured forth, he resolved to visit her in her bed-chamber, or wherever else he could find her.

“Louisa, who little suspected that surprise, was extended in that careless attitude to which most resort when suddenly awoke, and when the heat is almost insupportable. Her hands were placed over her eyes, as if to exclude the light, which was painful from its sudden admission; and charms unrivalled were not wholly concealed, either by the dress or the covering. Cavendish saw and gazed, and he must have been more than man who could have turned from the fairest picture Nature ever painted. She withdrew her hand; and there, leaning over the bed, his eyes fixed upon her and glaring with passion, stood her betrayer, her worst enemy, Cavendish.

“Those charms were instantly concealed,—a modest blush suffused her cheeks, and the affrighted girl saw at once the object and the determination of the villain. She soon found words to give force to her disgust, and desired the intruder instantly to withdraw. Cavendish heeded not the command, but gave vent to the violence of his excited appetite in words indecent and indecorous. He had shut the door, and now he locked it; and then, with quivering lip, he thus addressed his victim. Holding his finger to his lips as if to impose silence, he spoke in a whisper low yet audible, whilst a tremor agitated his body. ‘Hear me,’ said he, taking her hand,—‘hear me, or court your own ruin. The door is locked—we are alone; and if through false delicacy you alarm your neighbours, what will be the consequence I need not tell. Louisa to be found in her bed, and I by her side! consider before you act hastily. The servant who will come will find his entrance obstructed; the knowledge of this being your chamber will look like connivance; your late ride with the stranger, your supposed husband’s absence.—Hush! hush! there

are footsteps along the passage; let go that bell-rope, and listen to one who is come to claim you as his own.'

" 'Away, away! you false villain!' replied the spirited girl; 'thus and thus I show you how little I heed your caution or your falsehoods!' and saying which, she rang the bell with violence. 'Now stay,' she continued, 'whilst I denounce you as a thief to the police; and be convinced by this act how little you have to expect from Louisa Stanhope,—who, however much she may be fallen, is still high enough to despise the creeping, cringing coward who thus insults her.'

"Footsteps were heard along the passage,—the door attempted, and found locked. Louisa, calling her maid by name, desired her to break it open; and then turning to Cavendish, who stood trembling like the detected ruffian he was, she said in a firm voice, 'Unlock that door, sir.' He did as he was desired, and the maid entered.

" 'How came that man,' said Louisa with a dignity little to be expected under such circumstances,—'how came that man admitted into my bed-chamber when I was asleep? Look round

the room, Mary, and see that I have lost nothing, before you allow him to escape ; and desire the landlord to come here directly.'

"Astonishment at the very suspicion of the theft, and knowing the disgraceful attack he had made on the supposed wife of his pretended friend, Cavendish was not long in resolving upon a retreat ; and as he stepped into the passage, he met two of the ladies who had so civilly deserted Louisa the day before. The darkened room, the knowledge that Louisa was still in bed—or, at least, had not appeared,—and the cautious, hasty manner Cavendish avoided all communication,—certainly did not take from the conviction already entertained, that their former acquaintance had connived at this meeting, and had actually remained in her bed-chamber in order to meet her new acquaintance.

"In the mean time Mary's mind was not inactive. She had seen Cavendish the day before one of the party to the waterfall ; she had gleaned sufficiently of his description to know that he was the person who accompanied her mistress home ; she had seen the state of her habit, and

had now caught him, a perfect stranger, in the hotel, in the bed-room, with the door fastened, and her mistress not yet risen. Strange misgivings rushed over her mind—women know how quick their sex are at backing out of a difficulty—and Mary considered the hasty order for the master of the house, the idea of the theft, as so many subterfuges to avoid detection,—nay, the very confusion, the perfect exhaustion which overcame her when she saw her chamber vacated by Cavendish, was a confirmation in the mind of the servant that something was rotten in the state.

“It was some time before Louisa recovered herself sufficiently to go through that long operation of the toilet, and she saw that her maid was far from being the ready, obliging servant she had ever been;—her orders were sullenly, silently obeyed; the little chatter of household scandal and womanly surmises were hushed; and Louisa felt most poignantly the suspicion of her servant, and soon resolved to remove it.

“‘It is very odd,’ she began, ‘how that man could have the impudence to intrude himself into

my bed-chamber, and have the audacity to lock the door.'

" 'Is that Mr. Cavendish, ma'am, the gentleman who rode home with you last night?' asked the servant.

" 'Yes,' replied Louisa with some hesitation ;
" but I never saw him before yesterday.'

" 'Lord ! then,' said Mary, who had watched the change in her mistress's countenance in the looking-glass, before which she was sitting, and apparently arranging her front air, whilst the inquisitive servant was twisting the back,—Lord ! then, I wonder how he came to be of the party !'

" 'He intruded himself,' replied Louisa :
'he is an old friend of Harry's, and therefore did not wait for an invitation.'

" 'Well, ma'am, it does astonish me,' continued the maid, 'how he should have known this was your room. You couldn't have told him last night when he had his hand round your waist ?'

" 'What do you mean, Mary ?—what insolence is this ?'

“ ‘ Oh ! none, ma’am, I ’m sure ; only seeing is believing, like, as the vulgar people say ; and I have left the mark of the hand upon your habit, you see, ma’am.’ ”

“ ‘ Ha, very likely, Mary, for he lifted me on my saddle after I was thrown.’ ”

“ ‘ But that, ma’am, was *before* the storm came on.’ ”

“ ‘ It would better become you, Mary, to pay attention to your own business than to make those kind of remarks. If I account for it, that is sufficient.’ ”

“ ‘ Ah ! poor dear Master Harry !’ continued Mary, ‘ if he knew it,—and the very day after he left you too,—it would break his heart, that ’s what it would. Oh, how I do pity him ! that ’s what I do.’ ”

“ ‘ I ’m sure,’ replied Louisa, ‘ you are very kind and tender-hearted ; but it occurs to me that I am more to be pitied than he is. I wonder what is to break *his* heart ?’ ”

“ ‘ Oh ! ma’am, he ’ll hear it all : the commissionnaires say you remained behind with Mr. Cavendish, the servants know it was three o’clock

when you came home, and I'll take my bible oath I saw him in this room before you were out of bed. You need not look so, ma'am,—thank God I speak the truth ! Not one of the ladies have inquired after you ; and if you had been thrown, of course they would have done so. Well, well, although I am a poor servant, I know what's right ; and I should be much obliged to you, ma'am, to take this as a warning.'

“ ‘ As a warning of what, you impudent jade ? tell me directly,’ said Louisa.

“ ‘ I should like to better myself, ma'am,—I can't stay with you now ; and when Mr. Harry comes home, he'll know it all, and I am sure he'll leave you directly.'

“ ‘ I am sure *you will* leave me directly,’ replied Louisa, with all the calmness of virtue, (that is, as far as she was innocent in the point in question,) ‘ for such insolence I will never suffer. Better would it have been, and more creditable, for one woman to have assisted another, rather than to have forsaken her mistress, even had she been in error.'

“ ‘ Oh ! Lord, no, ma'am ; I never should get a

character if I remained with you now. All the servants below have been a-talking about last night's business, and some of them say you never were the wife of poor dear Mr. Harry, and two of the ladies saw the gentleman come out of the room just now.'

" 'Leave me directly; go out of the room this instant, Mary.'

" 'Oh yes, ma'am; but I knows what I knows—thank God I have got a clear conscience. I hope you wer'n't much hurt by your fall last night, ma'am? If you don't require the month's warning, I hope you'll pay me my wages to-day, and it's not Mary Lancing who will trouble you, *miss*, much longer, I'll be bound for it,—that's what I will.' And thus, very unlike the sounds of harmonious music gradually diminishing in the distance, did this insolent Jezebel make herself heard as she retired.

" 'Come back, Mary,' said Louisa. The maid obeyed. 'Fasten my dress behind; and tell them to take breakfast into the saloon. Mind what I tell you: if I find that you add one word to your fellow-servants below, you will have some cause

to repent of it. I shall not discharge you until Mr. Harry returns, in order that I may hear you recount to him the anecdote of Mr. Cavendish's insolence. The heart which knows its innocence defies the slander and the malice of the world. You will sit in this room, and take care that no one is admitted into the saloon; and you will desire the master of the house to have another bed placed here.'

"The cool manner in which Louisa pronounced these words had their due effect upon Mary, and she became a little less disposed to be loquacious.

"Louisa knew the hasty temper, the suspicious, jealous temper of Harry; and in an instant she saw the danger of discharging the maid before his return. Safe in her own innocence, she had resolved on the first instant of his arrival to tell the whole unvarnished tale, and to call the maid as an evidence of the intrusion of Cavendish; and scarcely had this forlorn child of misfortune matured her plan, when the idea of a duel as the necessary consequence scared her from her intention. However, this she parried

by the reflection, that if Harry had already branded Cavendish as a coward, little would the latter heed the challenge. In all probability he would decamp upon the first news of the arrival; for the man who seeks by words and deeds to ruin the weak and to insult the forsaken, is not the hero who would brave the battle to offer satisfaction, or to court danger to gratify desire. Cavendish was a systematic liar; bold before those he knew to be weaker than himself,—a coward in his heart, a villain in his ideas.

“That day Louisa was neither inquired after by her former associates, nor again molested by her persecutor. One benefit counterbalanced the other evil. Her worst enemy was her own thoughts, her worst ally her own maid; for, in spite of advice or caution, the tongue of a lady’s maid is very little under control of the proper authority, and wag it will, either for or against somebody.

“In this uncomfortable dilemma Louisa remained until Tuesday; and four times had Mr. Cavendish attempted an entrance into the saloon, but each time he found the door locked. He then turned his attack upon the maid, and endeavoured

by bribes to gain her over to his interest. In this he at first failed also ; for Mary was not so sure the reports were gospel,—more especially as her mistress retained a calmness of spirit which, if all were true, she must have been more than woman to have commanded. However, she promised to assist Cavendish, and, after some scruples, took the bribe. On this Tuesday a letter arrived from Harry, mentioning his probable arrival that evening. The letter was couched in affectionate terms, and hinting his having drawn largely, and secured sufficient for their future wants ; and, in conclusion, intimated his firm resolution once more to try his fortune in order to recover his losses. Her eye brightened as she read the letter ; there was a marked affection throughout, and she felt that if she could but wean him from the vortex of dissipation by which he was whirled in the giddy round of gambling, and which would inevitably suck him down at last, his heart was still hers, that better prospects might yet dawn—that her character might be restored, if not entirely saved. Scarcely had she finished this letter when a waiter delivered her another ; — it

was from Cavendish. She hesitated in opening it. At first she thought it would be better to place the letter into Harry's hand, with a solemn assertion that she had opened it not knowing from whom it came ; but that she was as ignorant of its contents as the unborn babe. Then came female curiosity—certainly rather a strong advocate for a hasty perusal, and then appeared before her the magnanimous part of braving all danger—she felt herself secure in the arrival of Henry ; and therefore, yielding to the temptation and the triumph, she resolved to gratify the laudable curiosity, and she read as follows, wondering as she read, that he who could stoop to the low artifices he had practised in endeavouring to corrupt her maid, could pen such a letter, with so much feeling and so much apparent openness.

CHAPTER VII.

“ ‘ DEAREST LOUISA,

“ ‘ THE day is nearly arrived when, if you regard a sacred promise, you will be mine. I feel, however, that some apology is due to you for the manner by which I obtained that promise, and my conduct since our return from Coö. If any blame is to be attributed to me, remember that when a man *loves*, his reason forsakes him, he sees but one object, he strives to gain but one point—the very faculties and abilities with which God may have blessed him fall into disuse, and the passion for the object to be obtained alone occupies his heart, his mind, his soul, and his memory. My excuse for my unmanly behaviour is that passion; for my intrusion into your bed-chamber, my love is the culprit; my whisperings against your reputation,

my very conspiracy against your character, were dictated by a feeling too fond to fear a difficulty, and too sincere to be turned aside without a desperate struggle. In this confession of my love receive my apologies ; it is a virtue more inherent in your sex than in ours to forgive. I implore you now to consider me not as the conspirer against your honour, but as the guardian and protector of your innocence. Harry is in England : a reconciliation has taken place with his father upon the distinct promise that he should abandon you ; and believe me that even should he return, his object would be to shake off the incumbrance—to rid himself of the clog which he considers and which he has mentioned you to be as far as regards himself. His love was a boyish passion,—it is satiated, and he is cloyed ; you were his victim, and you are to be sacrificed : but my affection shall console you for the loss of him who never merited your attachment, and my sincerity shall be proved in the many years I trust we are still destined to live together. To-morrow I claim you as mine ; everything shall be ready to convey you

hence,—your bill shall be discharged, and you my own. Oh, can I forget that night of storms and thunder, when, encircled in my arms, I hugged you closer and closer to my bosom, giving and receiving those warm and envied kisses which monarchs might be proud to enjoy, and which inspired me with new life, new prospects, and new enjoyments! It must be your care immediately to circulate a report that *he* is sick at Brussels, and that I have kindly offered my services to convey you to him. Once freed from Spa, my residence in any part of this world depends upon yourself; your choice will be my guide, your wish my law. I cannot conclude this letter, for whilst I write it I seem in your presence and conversing with you; I watch with rapture the bright flash of those dazzling eyes, and seem to catch the murmurs of response which flow from your envied lips. *I* will never whisper to strangers a reproach against your fame, *I* never will attempt to break the chain which love has entwined around me; and the more adversity may press upon you, the closer I will wrap you in my arms—the more sincere and lasting shall

be my attachment. Farewell until to-morrow ! a few lingering hours, and Cavendish and all his fortune will be at your feet. Adieu, adieu, best and fairest of God's creatures !'

"She placed the letter in her bosom, and heaving a deep sigh, threw herself upon her sofa. 'What security,' said she, 'has a woman—a confiding, sincere woman—against a villain like Cavendish? Who could believe this letter to be as false as the villain's heart? But happen what may, never will I disgrace myself by being the mistress of an unprincipled gambler.'

"Harry returned. Louisa rushed into his arms and wept for joy. Some remnant of early virtue still clung to my son,—even he could not restrain his tears; he looked at her with one of those fond impassioned looks, he gave way to the feelings of his heart, and that moment was a bright spark of happiness before it was entirely extinguished. To Louisa's questions he replied with an apparent candour. He had been, he said, as far as Antwerp; and there he managed to procure a large sum of money, which he had

placed in a bank at Brussels: he was now in affluence, and again the smiles of the world would enliven his retreat. Yet was there something so false, so hollow in his manner that Louisa suspected what she did not dare to express. ‘I thought,’ said she, ‘you had been in England?’

“The colour forsook his cheeks; he answered with a hasty voice, ‘No; I did not dare to cross the water, for fear my father should learn my return—and I,’ he added in a playful manner, ‘be made a prisoner.’

“False, unhappy, ungenerous boy! he *had* been in England: he had discovered that I was in the country; he learnt from my bankers the injunctions I had given relative to the non-payment of his checks; he had allowed sufficient time to elapse for his visit to and return from Longdale House; he forged my name, and he received five thousand pounds which I had lodged a week before at my bankers’, and with which I had intended to purchase some addition to my estate. See—see, sir, the miseries—the crimes to which gambling leads! My son had nearly—very nearly

committed a murder ; he had broken the vow—the recorded oath taken at the altar of his God ; he had forsaken his wife, he had deceived his friend, he had ruined the virtuous, he had plunged a family into disgrace and misery, he had violated the law of God, and now had sacrificed his life to the laws of his country ; and yet was he young in the iniquity which he afterwards so zealously pursued ! As if, indeed, the path of crime was strewn with flowers instead of thorns,—like the tiger which has once tasted human flesh, like the bloodhound that has once sucked human blood, like the dog which has once pursued its prey, or the hungry shark which follows the pilot-fish to the bait—so followed my son the disreputable course he had trodden—so lingered he on the road to ruin and destruction, that they both overtook him before he had the courage to ‘ turn from his wickedness and live.’

“ ‘ Harry, my love,’ continued Louisa, ‘ you must arm yourself to hear something which report has busily circulated, and which will stab your generous heart to the core.’

“ ‘ It cannot be !’ said the affrighted youth ;

‘ so quick—the rumour could not have reached Spa already ! Then go, Louisa,—go, pack up everything directly ; I will discharge the account ; we must not linger one moment,—ill tidings never tarry, and justice though tardy is sure.’—It was the idea of the forging being discovered that shook him.

“ ‘ How kind, my Harry, thus to save my character !—this is again my own Harry ! Oh, how I have longed for you ! That cruel, cruel Cavendish circulated the report, and every one at Spa credits it.’

“ ‘ The devil blister his malicious tongue : But quick—if I am suspected——’

“ ‘ You, dearest Harry ?’

“ ‘ Why, did you not say so ?—did you not say the report had reached Spa ?’

“ ‘ What report, Harry ? You are strangely agitated.’

“ ‘ Ay !’

“ ‘ Four days ago Cavendish unmasked us ; he ——’

“ ‘ I live again ; it cannot be ! Now tell me—I am calmer, more collected ;—the worry of the

journey, the pleasure at again seeing you, my father's letter, all deranged me—I was dreaming, I believe. — But, darling, Cavendish you were speaking of, that imp of the devil—what of him ? What has he said that the town should credit, or that I should fear ?

“ ‘ You must be cooler, more collected, Harry, before I begin ; I will not distress you the first hour of your arrival : no, this moment is for love returned,—and as I cling round your neck, and kiss you thus, and thus, I feel all my cares removed, all my wrongs redressed. But, Harry, we had better leave Spa directly ; and perhaps it were better now to settle the account than to risk it until to-morrow.’

“ ‘ That I was prepared to do, and you speak wisely in recommending the payment of the account ; for we gamblers are rich and honest one moment, poor and ungenerous the next.’

“ ‘ Tell your maid to get ready, and I will ring for the bill this instant.’

“ ‘ Mary,’ said Louisa as the maid entered the room, ‘ you must pack up our things to-night,

for we leave Spa to-morrow morning early. Now don't idle the time, but be quick.'

" 'Am I, ma'am, to pack up master's things also : do you go together ?'

" 'To be sure we do,' replied Harry. 'What would you have a man travel in one carriage, and his wife and his luggage in another ?'

" 'Certainly not,' continued Mary ; 'but I have told Miss,—I beg your pardon—Mrs.,—that I should provide myself with another place, and I hope she will not require the month.'

" 'Indeed ! and pray, Mary, what may be the reason of your sudden departure ?' asked Harry.

" 'To save my character, sir,' replied the impudent creature. 'If we serves people like Miss Louisa, we cannot get another place : but a lady here, who knows that I was ignorant who she was, has offered to take me ; and so, sir, if you please to pay me my wages I shan't trouble you to take me away with you.'

" 'What's this ?' said Harry, looking at Louisa.

" 'Leave the room, Mary, and do as I told

you.' When alone with Harry, she explained the story concerning the Coo party; but she neglected to state the whole truth, in order, if possible, to save a personal rencontre: she had suppressed the late ride, and the insult offered to herself. Harry stamped and raved, not for the actual discovery so much as that it might lead people to watch their movements. To shake off Louisa was his only idea: for himself, he was provided with a false passport; he could easily pursue his journey to Italy, under the inserted name of Rockingham; whilst those who pursued him, if such pursuit occurred, would follow his proper name, to whatever place the forlorn Louisa might bend her steps. This had been his plan, and this he had matured in his journey from Antwerp. Here was an opening; time was scarce, the forgery would be discovered, and he knew that the hounds of justice would scent his track. His face betrayed the black malignity of his heart; he walked to and fro—he answered not the inquiries of Louisa, who, watching every working of his countenance, continued weeping in anxious suspense.

“ ‘ Cavendish never saw you before,’ he at last began ; ‘ you must have given him some encouragement, Louisa, or he would not have dared to have divulged what I so unguardedly uttered. From his lips will I learn the truth this instant, and before I return I will have fathomed the lowest depth of this intrigue. Take care of this money until I come back : if it is as I suspect, we part for ever to-morrow morning.’ ”

“ The clouds of misfortune which had collected slowly over the devoted head of Louisa were now about to burst. She threw herself on the sofa and gave vent to the bitterness of her feelings. For him she had sacrificed

‘ State, station, heaven, mankind, her own esteem ;’ and now to be suspected, now to be cast like a loathsome weed to rot in negligence—mayhap to wander a convicted prostitute over the face of the earth to be spurned from the door she had refused to enter—to be a houseless vagrant, a byword and a scorn !

“ The interview with Cavendish was short. He advanced what Harry was too ready to credit : from him was elicited the late ride, and with it

the assertion that Louisa had proposed it ; that from her light behaviour her company had deserted her ; that he had been admitted into her bed-chamber ; and that, in fact, it was useless to quarrel about a girl who was unworthy of credit. Cavendish put the question in the darkest point of view—the impossibility of the sudden desertion of the females if something had not occurred ; and that since that day not one had called upon her. He used every endeavour to persuade Harry to desert her, and advised him to examine the maid as a confirmation of his statement.

“ Mary was loquacious when her *opinion* was required. The disordered state of the dress, the confusion of the story relative to the fall, the print of the hand round the waist, and her solemn oath that on entering the room she found Mr. Cavendish by the bed-side, the door having been locked, and she desired not to disturb her mistress until she was summoned ;—to a naturally jealous man this would have excited painful suspicions ; but to a man resolved to part from a woman, and who considered his own safety as compromised as long as his name remained the same, and so long as his

movements must be traced should he be encumbered with a family, it was quite sufficient. He now made preparations for his departure without saying a word to Louisa. The false passport had been viséed at Brussels for Geneva ; and his own, in which Louisa appeared as his wife, was viséed at Spa for Paris. He had two carriages—the lightest he took for himself ; and he ordered the horses to be ready at half-past nine, at which hour it was dark. Now came the parting scene. He cautiously avoided entering the house until a quarter after nine. He had seen every preparation made, and actually saw the horses harnessed ; and when assured that his retreat would be instantaneous, he wound up his cowardly determination, and forcing over his countenance the gloominess of disgust, he entered the apartment. There was Louisa sobbing upon the sofa, her face buried in her hands. She saw him not, she heard him not ; but she started like a detected criminal when she heard his deep-toned voice pronounce her name. She rushed towards him—she extended her arms, she would have fallen into his, but—with a slow and measured pace he withdrew. He waved to her

to be seated; he repulsed her advance, and he checked even the current of affection. ‘Louisa,’ he said, ‘we must part for ever. I could have borne much—nay, more than most men; but when I think of the sacrifice I made for you—when I see before me the attenuated form of my wife rising now to mock me for my base abandonment of her, and rebuking me for my violated oath, for one who has now deserted me, or has caused me by her shameless behaviour to become an outcast in my own home, and who, in her selection of a betrayer, has taken the only man on earth hated and despised—a man who was and is a gamester and a villain! I can neither forgive nor forget the insult. Louisa, we must part. Your guilt——’

“‘Oh, no, no, no! Hear me, Harry! By heavens, I am as innocent as unspotted snow, saving in the sacrifice I have made to you!’

“‘What! can guilt and impudence be carried so far?—But it is useless. Did you not remain behind until dark at Coo to ride alone over those desert hills with Cavendish?’

“‘No, never: it is true I did wait, and it is true he rode home with me.’

“ ‘Then why conceal this from me when you accused him to me this morning? The fall you omitted, sweet innocence! and there on your habit remains the firm print of the hand of that scoundrel Cavendish, and in a position which was never required to place you again on the horse.’

“ ‘Oh, Harry, Harry, you will break my heart! Can *you* believe—you whom I have loved as few ever loved—that I would disgrace myself with a mere stranger?’

“ ‘Did you consider it no disgrace when you escorted him to your chamber, and when you locked the door?’

“ ‘What infamous liar has thus poisoned my Harry’s words? It is false—as false as I am true! He *did* force himself, when I was asleep, into my room, and locked the door; but ask if my bell did not summon assistance.’

“ ‘Such timid creatures as my innocent Louisa,’ retorted Harry with a sneer, ‘might have locked their own doors in a public hotel.’

“ ‘You cannot believe it! My worst suspicions are confirmed—you *have* been in England, and in the shame which rises on your countenance I see

the confirmation of the report,—you have agreed to abandon me, to screen yourself, and you have basely consented to sacrifice the innocent to save the guilty.—But, Harry, you are ill. Oh pardon me the words your sneer forced from me ! take me again to your arms, confide in me, and life itself should be wasted in serving you. Oh, Harry, Harry, remember me as I was when I first yielded to your love !—think of the ruin I have spread over my aged parents, and how the daughter on whom all kindness was lavished has brought her mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave ! Remember that it was under the most solemn promise of my marriage, should death free you from the being you deserted—that was the last persuasion which shook my resolution ; and now, oh shame, shame ! to listen to a man you have branded as coward—to heed the whisper of an impertinent maid, when I stand here to vindicate my own suspected character !

“ Harry was staggered at the boldness of the appeal, and as the guilty are always timid, he did not bear the look of innocence without faltering. Now he felt it more requisite than ever to break from her ; he uttered in a low voice, ‘ It is useless,

Louisa,—the proofs are too strong, even the most incredulous would waver. 'True, too true is the saying, 'the once fallen woman must for ever fall.' I might have known that she who sacrificed herself to me at the expense of her own virtue would only be true until another fancy occupied her mind: I see, I am convinced against my will of your guilt; the ride, the fall, the room, Cavendish's own words, your maid's report, your own suspicious manner——'

" 'Hear me, Harry, this once. By all I ever held sacred—by my mother whose heart I have broken, by my father who has disowned me, by my God who has deserted me, I am not guilty—I never harboured one thought against you; and now I will never leave you—nay, start not, you shall tear me from your heart, and shall spurn me from this embrace, but leave you I will not—cannot. As she vehemently expressed these sentiments, she wound her arms round his neck.

" 'Away then, false woman!' continued Harry; and as in the struggle he endeavoured to untwine her arms, Cavendish's letter fell from its hiding-place.

" 'What's this?' said Harry: 'a letter, by

heavens! and by a strange hand. Let us see who is the favoured swain of my innocent Louisa.— Ah, from Cavendish! Lovers' letters begin anywhere;—what's this I read!—"Can I forget that night of storms and thunder, when, encircled in my arms, I hugged you closer and closer to my bosom, giving and *receiving* those warm and envied kisses"— Hence, horrible, false, perjured, impudent woman! thus I destroy the evidence against you.'

" 'Oh, Harry, tear it not,—save it, save it! The first part will prove my innocence. Justice, justice,—Harry, even the murderer is not denied that!'

" 'Away,—your very breath is pollution since you breathed upon that villain! — Kisses given and received,—the very letter warmed near her treacherous heart, and not one word said about the correspondence!—Go, go!'

" 'Oh, where—where can I go? Hear me, Harry, I implore you!'

" 'Go anywhere, rather than in my footsteps. Unhand me, I say! What still clinging. Then thus, thus I rid myself of my burthen—of the falsest, the most treacherous of females!'

“With these words he flung her from him. The poor girl fainted upon the floor; when Harry, throwing some notes upon the table, rushed down stairs, got into his carriage; and before the forlorn, neglected Louisa recovered from the stupor, Harry had left her for ever and for ever, and was far on his road from Spa.

“It is here alone that I attempt to vindicate my son; for, leaving the forgery question aside, and considering merely the evidence as brought before him, the most confident would have wavered. Had he read the letter, he would have been convinced of her innocence—had she shown it at once, it would have disarmed suspicion: but who is there cool and collected at all times? who can tamely hear himself suspected of a crime, and still retain the outward show of innocence? Harry was a villain in his heart, and I forgive him the forgery rather than the abandonment of Louisa. But it is ever so: the gamester cannot love—the excitement of play paralyses every other passion; and the woman who has a husband a gamester can never know the real joy of domestic happiness. Gamesters are generous, because hope is ever liberal: their generosity arises from the unknown value of

riches ; he who is accustomed to throw down hundreds upon one chance is not likely to inspect a bill, or quarrel about its amount. I feel myself overpowered by my exertion now, and therefore shall become a borrower on your hospitality for another day. But we must leave Louisa to her destiny until the fate of my Harry shall be disclosed. Good night, Robert ! I hope the lesson already given may not be useless ; and when you pass before your mind the memory of Louisa, prepare yourself for the natural consequence of one false step in a woman's life."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE day over, the dinner finished, they again drew near the fire, and the old gentleman continued his story. It is requisite to observe, however, that he kept Robert in profound ignorance as to his name; and he seemed to watch him narrowly during the day, more to see how he occupied his time than with the desire of disagreeably spying into his pursuits. He himself seemed busy about some papers which he read and altered; but he kept always the opposite extremity of the table from Douglas, and appeared very careful to conceal his occupations. As he was evidently an uncommon acquaintance, Robert took care not to offend him, and cautiously abstained from glancing his eye towards him. This seemed to satisfy him, and age and youth lived together harmoniously.

“We left my son,” the old gentleman resumed, “flying from Louisa, and endeavouring to fly from himself. That, however, is no easy matter; and the man who bears about him an eternal hell in his own conscience, never knows the comfort of one moment’s ease;—he is haunted by the remembrance of his crimes, he becomes a coward, he fears the glance of the stranger, and in every bush imagines an officer. Harry had now assumed the name of Rockingham—as such he was designated on his passport, and he determined to vary his route in such a manner as to dodge any pursuer. He had left his servant behind at Spa, and passing through Aix-la-Chapelle, he directed his course towards Cologne, alone. At Cologne he hired a domestic, something between a courier and a rascal, and having shipped himself and his carriage he proceeded by the Rhine some few leagues, when he landed again, and taking post-horses made all despatch towards France, through which he travelled until he arrived at Cleremont, a village between Amiens and Paris, and not frequented, although in the high road, by many travellers.

“His first care was to get the English papers

from the time of the forgery ; but although every police report was scanned with guilty exactness, yet not one word could he discover tending to alarm him. The fact is, that the very day after he had forged the check, I arrived in town to complete my purchase, and on examining my account I saw at once that something wrong had occurred. Being well aware of the desperate behaviour of my son, my suspicion fell on him ; and on asking who received the money, I was told my son, and yesterday. I knew what would be the consequence of my avowing the forgery, and made no further remark than that some more stock must be sold out, and gave the directions for its being done ; consequently nothing was ever known of the transaction, and you are the only living creature who is a partner in the secret.

“ After sufficient time had elapsed, in order to lull him into security, my son despatched his servant to Paris to make diligent inquiries concerning the family of the Stanhopes ; and having heard that they had long since left Paris and were residing in Rome, he decided on the desperate resolution of returning to the French metropolis. He took up his quarters in the Hôtel

Mirabeau, in the Rue de la Paix, and seemed resolved to husband his remaining resources.

“At this time my wife died. She had endeavoured to trace her son ineffectually ; and I, enraged as I was against him for his shameless behaviour to me, wished her not to succeed. I had hoped that, deprived of money, and now awake to his misguided mode of life, he would have returned like a second prodigal son, and sued for forgiveness : I therefore kept back my wife’s letters, little dreaming that her end was so near.

“She died of the sudden rupture of a blood-vessel. She had been my companion for twenty-five years ; and although we may have occasionally differed in opinion, yet we never once quarrelled, or allowed the sun to go down upon our displeasure. Her words were few after the accident, but those were all for her lost Harry. She exacted a solemn promise of my forgiveness, and she urged me to inculcate virtue in the breast of her son. In the very agonies of death her voice feebly gurgled, ‘My son, my son!’ and as, in the last floating vision of the imagination, she stretched forth her arms to press him to her heart, she died and left

me alone in the world. This event detained me in England, for my grief was not feigned : no one can tell, who has not experienced it, the loss of a wife,—she who for a quarter of a century has been your hourly companion, who has watched your wants and relieved them—who has assuaged the fever of sickness, and comforted the wounded in spirit. Day has succeeded day, and night, night ; yet never has the morning dawned without a prayer for her, or my evening's address to the Almighty been offered without recurrence to her name ; and if the supplications of an infirm pilgrim before he lays down his staff and scrip be acceptable in the sight of Heaven, she shall know the affection of her husband, she shall rejoice over his prayer for her eternal salvation."

It was some time before the aged companion recovered himself sufficiently to proceed, and Robert began to be apprehensive that the exertion had overpowered him. He rallied, however, in a quarter of an hour, and Robert entreated him not to continue the recital which caused him so much pain, and which so agitated his mind.

"It is my duty," he replied,—“you must know

all ; the time may come when your knowledge of these truths may be beneficial to you. I am better now, and, thank God, have passed one of the most wretched periods in the anecdote of my unfortunate existence ; and now for the end. In the end of Harry, how often have I used the words of the great poet,

‘ In all thy visitations, gracious Heaven !
Save me, oh save me from that dreadful curse,
A disobedient child !’

and sometimes have I been so wicked as almost to arraign the justice of Providence in having cursed me with an ungrateful boy. The usual announcement in the papers met the eye of Harry ; and it is one redeeming virtue, amidst the multitude of his sins, that he dropped a tear for the memory of his departed parent. It appeared by some letters, or rather copies, found in his drawer, that he meditated suing for forgiveness ; for one half sheet, on which was written the effort at reconciliation, confessed all the errors of his life, and gave an earnest of future amendment. Had this been sent, he had been saved, and I might have died in contentment.

“The grief for his mother’s loss soon passed, and he once again ventured into the vortex of dissipation. Gaming is never eradicated; it may be apparently smothered, but the fire still burns—the smoke still testifies its existence, and it requires but the slightest air to fan it into a flame. Harry became wretched in his solitude; for idleness can never exist without a victim,—there must be some one to be pestered, some one to be bored with the eternal endeavour of the idle to rid themselves of themselves.

“Again had Harry recourse to gaming. Fearful of being recognised at the Salon, apprehensive that the silence in the papers was a plan in order to discover his retreat, he never ventured out until dark; and then, instead of visiting the more gentlemanly resorts of Frascati’s and the Salon, he crept away to the Palais Royal, and there, in number 154, soon managed to reduce his income and to lose his capital. It was now that all the bad passions of his heart started from their lurking-place. He who had forged had murdered, had lied, had deceived, was not a man

over-scrupulous of the means by which his purse was to be filled. The habits of his youth, the splendour to which he had been accustomed, still retained some command: he could not descend to the low manner of living so common to those *chevaliers d'industrie* who infest the French metropolis, having rooms filled with borrowed furniture to deceive their victim as to their resources, but who feed in seclusion, or who vegetate in obscurity. Money was now the idol of his heart. The less he had, the more he coveted; thus reversing the line which the schoolboy gets drilled into him when he blunders over his Latin grammar. To commit another forgery on me was not so easy; for his checks having been previously paid with a notice that no more would be paid, he was afraid to face the bankers, to whom he was personally known, and who without a letter of credit most certainly would not assist him. It then occurred to him, that whilst his creditable appearance was still evident, he had better resort to the Salon, and there borrow some money from the croupiers: they all knew him when his riches flowed in a rapid stream, and tended to enrich the large river

of ruin to which they were contributory. He had already been driven to part with some rings, and a watch which in the moments of his affluence he had bought: day after day brought him nearer and nearer to desperation, and already had the villanous modes of procuring resources been familiar to his mind. Accordingly, having dressed himself with much more care than usual, he entered that palace of ingenuity, that hotbed of ruin, that golden lure to wretchedness, the Salon des Etrangers. The servants recognised him at a glance, and he passed to the receiving-room. The noble marquis then at the head of the establishment greeted him cordially; and when the merry caster rattled the dice in the box, and called out '*à sept*,' Harry's soul seemed to bound with delight. He was soon at the table, and soon forgot all his cares in the excitement of play. He lost his all,—at that moment he had not one farthing in the world. He who could have commanded thousands was now a beggar, and would have been a cheat to have gained a napoleon. He called one of the servants, with the practised air of a man of fortune, and commanded rather

than asked for two thousand francs : it was brought immediately. Harry had been known as a man of fortune ; his gallantries had been circulated ; and such is Fame, that he whose heart was hardened in sin and iniquity, was trumpeted forth as a dashing fellow, to whom fortune had been generous, and to whom most women had been kind. This is a species of vanity to which most Frenchmen aspire : a slight intrigue with your best friend's wife, a trifling incestuous intercourse, the seduction of your brother's daughter, the murder of some half-dozen of old companions in duels, tend more to elevate than to ruin the character of the hero. A Frenchman is always vain of his success with women, and his unerring aim in a duel : they talk of it as pleasing trifles, and as they sip their claret at the cafés, they defame their victims either in virtue or courage. The evening grew towards a close. Harry had not been very unsuccessful, for on his return to the hotel he deposited seventy napoleons on the table ; so that he lost thirty, besides what money he took with him.

“ It was now that reflection, the tax of memory,

came too late. To enjoy a sound sleep, to awake refreshed from his slumbers, to have been blessed with happy dreams such as the remembrance of happy hours might produce, were unknown to him : he lay in a feverish kind of slumber, and not unfrequently some of the servants had overheard him scream during the night. His conscience was his hell. Never did the warning of that natural monitor ever slumber ; by day, by night, the sentinel kept his post : he had been placed there by the commission of sin, and returning virtue and returning repentance came not to relieve him from his labours. The works of imagination founded on the scriptural representations of the last abode for the wicked frightened not Harry so much as the conscience that bade him turn at every step to see if the hounds of justice were on the scent : his moral courage had flown—he dared not to look beyond the grave, although he would gladly have courted it to have buried his present fears and reproaches. It was this maddening, unceasing fire which consumed him. No longer was the stamp of health and youth upon his sallow cheek or sunken eye :

no longer did he dare to look the man with whom he conversed in the face,—his only courage was borrowed from wine, his only relief in the stronger excitement of play.

“ ‘ There,’ said he to himself,—‘ there is the last heap of gold I am ever destined to enjoy. To enjoy!—no, no, that is past for ever! How am I to repay this? I have promised on the Thursday following to discharge the debt: I have not a friend to whom I can apply; I dare not, under my own name, again commit a theft upon my father. Oh, my poor wife! driven to the grave by me! Would that I had listened to your just censures, and, in turning to her who loved me beyond all love, have left the paths of dissipation and of idleness! But now—— And there’s Louisa too, an outcast from the world, a common prostitute; or, perhaps, which galls me ten thousand times more, the mistress, the associate, the companion of Cavendish,—that devil who lured me to destruction, and by whose arts I was driven to commit the forgery. Well, then, I am resolved, since I cannot struggle against misfortune, I will overcome it. It was then for the first

time he thought of suicide. He carefully marked down upon paper his various arguments in favour of and against the act. His conclusion, which was erroneous, —was this, that any man was warranted to lay down a load he was too fatigued to carry. He argued not upon the presumption of rushing unsummoned into the presence of his Maker with all his imperfections on his head. To him relief from life was relief from care: all pleasures had fled away; —so young and so wretched, 'twas hard to bear, when by a struggle, when by the slightest motion of a nervous finger, the trigger would rid him of himself. It was then he loaded his pistols; but he deferred placing the copper-caps in their final situation. He looked at them, he put them to his forehead, and saying 'Why, it is only doing as much as I have done, and all is over,' '*I'll do it*' was dashed on the paper, 'but I'll live until my creditor is clamorous.'

“ It was on Monday morning that he met two Englishmen whom he had frequently seen at the different gaming-houses. They were anxious to make

Harry's acquaintance, and he was by no means averse to the introduction. 'They bowed as they passed, and Harry stopping, they turned round and soon were in conversation. All talked of their losses, but of their resolution to return again to recover or to sink lower, and in order to suggest some plan of play they dined together. An intimacy was thus established, and from that day until Wednesday morning they were frequently together.

" 'Why, Rockingham,' said Musgrove, 'they treated you rudely last night: you must have lost a precious deal — some thousands of franks, I am sure; for I overheard the servants doubting if they should advance you more money, and although they called you by some other name——' Harry's face grew red in a trice. 'Have you been there this morning to repay them?' continued Musgrove.

" 'No,' replied Harry; 'to-morrow I shall discharge all my debts in full, and satisfy the most greedy creditor. By-the-bye, will you both dine with me to-day at the Mirabeau? and after dinner

we can stroll to that infernal place, and so kill the evening.'

"Both accepted the invitation. The dinner was fixed for seven o'clock—a late hour in Paris, and Harry hastened homewards to give the necessary directions.

"At this time and at this hour I was in Paris. No sooner had I discharged my duties to my wife than I turned to reclaim my son. A letter from a friend of mine, my banker there, apprised me of my son's being in Paris: he had, he said in his letter, seen him at a café, and although he had not spoken to him, yet he was sure of his face. I lost no time in putting my scheme in progress: I had resolved to break in upon his solitude, and by tears and entreaties to recall him to the fondest and most affectionate of parents. At Calais I hired a carriage and proceeded to the capital; but, oh, how slow—very slow we appeared to progress! Half way on every stage the postilion stopped to take his glass of brandy. In vain I urged him on by promises of better pay—he smoked with the in-

difference of a Turk, and his whip hung over his shoulders in idleness. I rebuked him—he drove slower; when I recollected the proverb, ‘that no two animals were so obstinate as a donkey and a French postilion.’ I found all entreaties vain, and I threw myself back in the carriage, resolved to pay no more than the tariff. I will not weary you with the account of the most tedious journey I ever took in my life. The hope of arrival perhaps cheered me in my affliction, and when I drove into the court-yard of Meurice’s, I bounded from my imprisonment with the step and the vigour of youth. My first care was to examine the list of visitors at the hotel. I found no trace of Harry. Then recollecting that he always had resided at the Hôtel des Princes, I proceeded instantly to the Rue Richelieu. From them I gained no information. I then in despair—for Paris is a capital concealing place—went to the police. The officers afforded me every information they possessed with that urbanity for which they are so justly praised; but here I was unsuccessful again. I

then called at the banker's: they had not seen him — at least at their bureau. I inquired at every hotel—yes, even at the Mirabeau—but with no better success, until, wearied and fatigued, I returned to place myself at a dinner I could not eat, and to be in society whilst I felt most lonely. I had not slept for three nights previous to this. I felt myself a desert tree in a wilderness; my only hope, my only aim, was the recovery of my son. I pictured to myself a delight, to which none but a parent is sensible, in throwing my arms round my boy and lavishing forgiveness. Fatigue, however, overcame me: a man at my age soon feels the frost of years nipping his endeavours. I could not keep awake, and yet I was unwilling to sleep. At last the thought occurred to me to visit the different gaming-houses; but some of my companions of the *table d'hôte* happening to be in conversation concerning these very places, from them I gleaned that no man of any pretensions to the name of a gentleman frequented the low houses in the Palais Royal, and that the play never

began at the Salon until after midnight, or at any rate the company were few until the opera was over. I then retired to my room, left orders to be called at eleven, and throwing myself upon my sofa, was soon fast asleep."

CHAPTER IX.

“HARRY had determined to free himself from his worldly debts; he had wound himself up to the mark, and he now sat down to do the last act of grace before he mingled with society, borrowing from wine the spirit which nature, with such a load upon his mind, and such fearful results, denied him. I have mentioned that he seldom walked out in the day-time, and from the moment of his parting with his new acquaintances he returned to his room and penned a letter to me. He had desired his servant to pack up his clothes, and had given him to understand that he should cross to England on the Friday; at the same time he ordered his bills at the hotel to be prepared and sent up to him, leaving the dinner account as a separate charge. His desk he carefully examined, and he destroyed every

letter he had ever received either from his wife or Louisa. There was a small locket containing some hair of the former, which he wrapped up in paper, and on the outside were these words :— ‘ For my father.’ It was placed inside the letter, which was directed to me at my country residence, and which I have here, as I knew that this evening would bring me to the end of my history.

“ ‘ This is the last act an ungrateful, an ungenerous, and an undutiful son will commit before he goes hence and is no more seen. My life is now fast growing to a close ; and when the clock of the *Timbre** strikes the hour of midnight, my father will be childless, and his son in eternity. It is not, best of parents, trifles which have driven me to this act of desperation ; he who has played the deep game of life which I have played is already dead :—a wife driven to destruction ; the daughter of my friend seduced, and left without a protector and without a farthing ; myself a forger — a man condemned by the laws of

* The *Timbre*, or Stamp-office, is almost directly opposite the Hôtel Mirabeau.

his country, and condemned also by himself; a mother perhaps hurried to her grave broken-hearted through my faults; a father declining into his tomb without the natural prop to support or to comfort him. I could not live, for I am ashamed of existence. I would not breathe to be a by-word and a scorn—to have the finger of contempt pointed at me—to hear the tongue of insolence upbraid me for my forfeited life—to be sneered at by those whose society I once shunned—to be shunned by those I once courted. I leave this world its debtor; and as I depart, having swindled those who have ruined me, so likewise I depart cheating the executioner of his due, without one friend to close my eyes, or without a companion to receive my last words. I have now conquered myself,—I have divested death of its terrors by shrouding life in horror. To you I now turn, my father and my friend, to implore that forgiveness which I dare not supplicate from my God,—to call from your heart one tear, and from your voice, when it is raised to your Maker, one word in my behalf. Forgive me, father! forget your repentant but your still affectionate son. I know my errors,

and I confess them. It is an awful thing to stand upon the brink of eternity—to know that to-morrow's sun, which shall rise and shine upon this gay and dissolute world, shall never more be looked on by me; it is hard at my tender age to go down into the grave whilst the hissings and the hootings of my fellow-creatures shall follow the dead with their reproaches and revilings. Still, I feel that your prayer—your blessing—shall not be withheld. I stretch my arms towards my father, and in the fancied embrace I throw my soul to my God, and my last word to my parent.—Farewell! farewell! for ever farewell! As I have shunned you in this world, I cannot be so presumptuous as to dream of meeting your purer spirit in the next; but may the great God, the sovereign disposer of all things, so fortify your heart, that you may receive this with becoming resolution, and accept the last prayer,—the last word for your welfare, from your devoted—I dare not say your *dutiful* son. Amen.'

“In a less firm hand, and apparently written nearer his end, he calls upon me to protect Louisa.”

During the time the old gentleman was reading this letter, he became dreadfully agitated, and Douglass was so overcome, that he was unable almost to breathe. He swallowed the very effort at tears, for he felt that he might be called to administer some relief to his companion. The old gentleman recovered after some minutes, and continued :—

“Seven o’clock came, and with it his company. They were but three in all, and a repast had been prepared sufficient for ten. Every dainty of the season had been ordered, and wines the most luscious had been cooled. It was singular that my son should have actually written down the dishes he had provided ; and on several small slips of paper were written a few words, some of advice, some of warning : on one was ‘ Poor lost Louisa ! the world will use you worse than I have done ; it has no pity for the unfortunate, no tear for the afflicted ; ’—and at the bottom of his desk, although it was evidently written that day, was a letter to Louisa, which I will hereafter read to you. I mention these incidents to show how capable the mind of man is to surmount every

fear of death—if indeed shrouding life with horrors *can* divest death of its terrors. The dinner was announced and served. The conversation took its turn from my son, who commenced in glowing terms a vivid description of the luxuries of life: from his exposition one would have imagined him surrounded by every desirable object, in affluence, and with a conscience void of offence. Then the scene was changed for that of the Salon: he projected systems by which fortunate results were certain; he closely commented on the fairness of the play, the advantages of the bank, and his conviction that calculation could beat that preponderance; and even with the determination to commit the rash act, he lied in words, for he declared his intention of recovering his losses, and talked of to-morrow as if to-morrow was to dawn on him. Again the conversation changed, and women became the theme of admiration: no flush of guilt branded the cheek of the seducer; he revelled in luxurious description, and in his vivid delineation no modesty interfered to check the current of his discourse—it seemed to wanton in the remembrance of the past, and he drew

from his own heart the picture most likely to warm his companions. Neither was the wine spared, nor the wit silent ; in short, it was a carouse calculated to give his new associates the highest opinion of his talents and his affluence. The hours advanced, for his life was now pitted against time,—and ‘ he who combats against that,’ says Johnson, ‘ has an enemy not subject to many casualties.’ The sand was rapidly oozing through the glass of existence ; it wanted but one short hour of death—the clock had already struck eleven, yet no symptom of remorse for an ill-spent life was visible ; he seemed to have passed the worst, and only to dread solitude,—for when his companions proposed to withdraw, having already drunk more than the cool gamester should touch, my son asked as a favour that they would remain until midnight, and then one glass should be drunk to their future friendship——and *then*. It was remarked by Musgrove that a sudden paleness blanched my son’s cheeks ; but he recovered himself, and placing some cigars on the table,—for he had the ruling passion still in death,—he called for some brandy, and their conversation con-

tinued. Eleven came, and I was called, refreshed by my comfortable and sound sleep. I instantly departed for those hells of infamy. I entered Frascati's. There were sallow faces, starting eyes, anxious looks, and horrible silence; around the board some women of low character flitted, keeping the victims of passions—of unruly passions—within their grasp; but no Harry was there. I scanned every countenance. I passed round and round that table, but my son was not amongst those who debased their characters or staked their fortunes. I now crossed the Boulevards to the Salon. This golden region of demoralization was open. The splendid lamps shone through the windows, and the crowd of servants waiting in the hall, all of whom belonged to the establishment, convinced me that here my son would be found; for, in all his worst habits, the love of low company had never been his vice. I was denied admittance, as it was requisite I should be presented to the marquis, and he had not arrived. I stated myself to be the father of Harry; and the waiter who had advanced the money before mentioned, instantly informed me

that my son was in Paris, and was expected there after midnight. To my question of his abode there was some delay ; but a book being consulted, I was told he resided at the Hôtel Mirabeau. It wanted now but a quarter of twelve ; and as the night was cold I resolved to walk. With the firm step of happiness I passed along the Boulevards. I heeded not the brilliant cafés, I regarded not the hundreds who interrupted my path ; I pushed through the crowds ; I smiled within myself at the completion of my happiness, and I felt more satisfaction at reclaiming my son, than if he had fallen at my feet, and prayed for pardon. I rang at the hotel door ; and as the porter pulled the string, I remember the impetuous push I used to open the heavy gates. I asked for my son—they knew him not ; I looked at the list—no name like his was there. I described him as I remembered him. The porter shook his head ; at last he said, ‘ There is an Englishman who lives here, and only one, but his name is Rockingham ; here is a letter for some one of the name you mentioned : ’ and he showed me a note, which I afterwards found was an in-

itation to dinner at the Salon. I was convinced Rockingham was my son—hope is not easily extinguished; I insisted on seeing that Englishman, and after some little delay his servant was called to conduct me up stairs. At that moment the clock at the *Timbre* struck the hour of midnight. I heard a cheer—I recognised the voice of my son—I flew to the door, and, oh! horror, horror! no tongue can tell, no words explain, as I turned the latch I heard the report of a pistol, and bursting through the apartment and following the two companions, I arrived to throw myself upon the bleeding corpse of my son! He never spoke—life was gone. In vain I called upon him in all the fond accents of endearment—he was gone, he was dead! I pressed him to my bosom, I chafed his temples—I hugged him, kissed him, forgave him, blessed him,—but, ah! no words responded to mine, no movement of the compressed lips attempted an answer, but over the once vivid eye death had exercised its greatest power, and the glassy stare of the dead was too convincing even for the sanguine hope of a father. Then from the fulness of that hope

came despair ; I cried out, ‘ *I am his father—save him, save him !* ’ and I fainted.

“ How long I remained I know not ; but when I came to myself I found the room occupied by the dead, his former companions, the commissary of police, and one or two gendarmes. Some doubt seemed to be entertained by those gentlemen concerning his death, for one pistol was on the bed loaded, and the other, which had just been discharged, was found in a drawer so little open as almost to have rendered it impossible to have placed it there without opening the drawer. The suspicions of the police fell upon his companions ; and had not the letters been found in which he announced his intention of committing the act, those gentlemen would have been placed under a surveillance not very agreeable. I heeded not their interrogatives, I listened not to their surmises or suspicions ; I stood at the feet of the last of my hopes ; I saw my son — my only, my dear loved son, a corpse. I gazed in horrid silence ; there stretched upon the floor was the being in whom I had centred all my affection ! I now saw not the dark parts of his

character ;—I remembered only the days of his youth, and memory portrayed all the kind endearments of infancy ; I stood riveted to the spot, until, overcome by my grief, my head grew weaker, and feeling a sudden giddiness, I was unable to support myself, and fell upon the body.

“ Spare me the recital of the last offices. He lies in Père Lachaise, the spot he disdained to visit when alive ; and an epitaph, such as he himself had drawn for others, records his virtue and his age.

“ To the last he had been himself : towards midnight he never once seemed to flag in conversation, or to sadden at the approach of his death-warning ; on the contrary, he seemed to rebuke the laziness of time, and once or twice looked at his watch and wondered that so few minutes had flown. Just before the clock sounded, he filled his glass, and standing up, gave with a clear voice, a sparkling eye, and a steady hand, ‘ Those who love us.’ I heard the cheers. He then merely desired his companions ‘ to wait, as he was about to change his *state*,’—those were his words,—‘ in

order to play for a larger stake than he had as yet attempted.' Not a minute elapsed between the words and the act, and thus he fell.

“ I have plucked out my heart, Robert, in order to warn you from the dangers of the path he followed. Here in a few words are comprised all that idleness can lead to. On this score I need hardly have troubled you, for I have watched your occupations and think them creditable. Remember that Fortune may yet smile upon you ; and beware, when she has once bestowed her gifts, how you blindly follow in her train. Believe me, men are happier in mediocrity ; the rich and the great are hated and envied, the poor are scorned and despised. It is in the middling classes that most happiness is found. Never therefore, should the gifts of this world be lavished on you, seek to increase your store by risking what you have to gain a little more ; nor hazard that, the loss of which might cause the slightest regret. And now, Robert, I end my miseries. You see why I shun mankind ; you know why I feel myself the poor unfriended wretch I am. Riches are to me no inducement to live ; they

cannot purchase me the revival of my son, and without him I care not to exist. I am alone, not one of my blood remains alive ; and I care not to herd with those who can have no real interest in my welfare.”

“ Stop, sir !” exclaimed Robert ; “ before I thank you for the good advice—before I comment upon the mazes of misfortune into which your son rushed and plunged you, do grant me the favour to inform me of the fate of Louisa. Although a fallen woman, she risked all for love ; and perhaps there may still be time to warn her of the misery of approaching age, and to assist her in such a manner as to restore her to some of the comforts she once enjoyed.”

“ Would you do so, Robert, if you met her ?”

“ Most certainly, sir,” he replied. “ Poor as I am, I could still find a little to assist one who has lost all by her betrayed confidence in one of our sex.”

“ Generous fellow !” replied the old man: “ first hear this letter, which was written six hours before my son’s death. I hope his repentance was sin-

cere ; because if it were not, he must have been to his last moment a hypocrite and a liar. I will not believe that any man upon the brink of eternity is sufficiently daring to rush uncalled into the presence of his Maker with a lie on his lips, or a falsehood in his heart." He read the letter, which was as follows :—

“ Before I quit this world, I will do you the justice you deserve, and confess the faults and the crimes which have urged me to suicide. I *once* loved you, tenderly, sincerely : at that time the last drop of my blood would cheerfully have been shed to save your name from the blight my own conduct had entailed upon it. The love of play overcame the love of all that was beautiful—all that was affectionate ; and when I resolved to leave you at Spa, I knew you were innocent—I knew you would never submit to the embraces of a man you most thoroughly despised ; but I felt the necessity of leaving you to ensure my own safety. Hereafter my crimes and my misdeeds may come before you ; but I will not embitter the moments more than my death will do, by convincing you that your love was lavished

on a forger and a swindler. Return, Louisa, return to your family; they still are ready to receive you with open arms, and parental fondness, and by sincere repentance for the injury you have done them, an earnest promise of future amendment, and a resolution to live honestly, repair in some measure the mischief you have done, and which was occasioned by me. Even now, standing as I am upon the brink of the grave, with all the terrors of death before me, the retrospect of early acquaintance rushes over my memory, and, dearest Louisa, I see you beaming in beauty and in love. But, oh! forgive me, for I then really loved you: I gave a proof of that devotedness when I left my wife, blighted my character, broke my oath, renounced my God, for you. But now the hours fly; the last sand is oozing through the glass,—my minutes are numbered; yet Heaven is my witness that I ask not its forgiveness with more sincerity than I solicit your pardon. I have left a letter for my father, and have implored him to provide for you. I urge you again to return to those who still will cherish you; and I feel a calmness even at this dreadful time in the

assurance of your repentance and your future happiness. Again, again forgive me — pardon me, and offer one prayer for your once beloved Harry.”

The old gentleman folded the letter and replaced it in his box. He wiped some tears from his cheeks, which had rapidly coursed down the furrows of his face, and saying “Thank God, it is done,” he became more composed. After a pause of some minutes, during which time he fixed his eyes upon the cheerful fire, he exclaimed, “Such was Louisa; and now, thank Heaven, she is in comfort and in affluence,—but bitter was the path that led to it.

“When Harry left her at Spa,” resumed the old man, “Cavendish was at her side. She recovered only to ascertain the confirmation of her worst fears, and to be subjected to the company of the man she loathed and detested. She did not hate him — for no one can hate who never loved; she despised him. When sufficiently recovered, she told him her determination never to admit him into her society; and he as resolutely resolved to follow her to destruction: he even dwelt upon the consummation of his plan

with a hellish delight. The character of Harry was now gone : no man of honour could associate with one who had so shamefully violated the laws even of the most abandoned. To have left Louisa to struggle against the world, without the slightest idea where to turn, or whither to go, was the act of a coward ; yet, as I said before, had he not previously determined to abandon her, I could have forgiven him his suspicions of her fidelity, since the evidence, offered as it was, and the only half-read letter, would have staggered a better man. Cast now upon the world, she lost no time in leaving Spa. The carriage which had been left, and the notes Harry had thrown, offered convenience and the means of travelling respectably. Her maid accompanied her, for the idea of seeing Paris again consoled her for her debased situation : moreover, it was believed that she was in the pay of Cavendish.

“ The next morning at daybreak witnessed the departure of Louisa, who took the shortest road through Namur to Paris. Overcome by fatigue and anxiety of mind, this poor forlorn creature, whose fortune was now contained in her purse,

and who saw the necessity of husbanding it carefully, resolved to pass the night in the former city. She had not long been housed before the door opened, and Cavendish entered and again importuned her.

“ ‘Once for all, hear me and listen to me,’ said Louisa. ‘There is no power on earth shall ever make me yours. To you I am indebted for my present misery ; I have still heart enough and courage enough to despise you ; and I warn you, that so surely as you molest me, so surely will I inform the police of the annoyance. Quit this room directly.’ And thus saying, she gave no time for an answer, but rang the bell. Cavendish instantly retired, muttering something about ‘the world’s end, and satisfied revenge.’

“ On Louisa’s arrival in Paris, she boldly drove to her father’s former door. She was relieved from all those feelings which must have been uppermost in her mind, by the porter’s informing her that three months previously the family had left Paris—he believed for England. She did not remain one moment in suspense how to act, but ordering horses, directed her steps

towards Calais. She took the Amiens road, and passed through Clermont not ten minutes after the arrival of Harry. Having arrived at the coast, she discharged her maid, who instantly crossed the Channel. She then sold the carriage, and making her luggage as convenient as possible, she counted her fortune, which at that moment amounted to forty pounds sterling, after having paid her bill at the hotel. She now crossed the water to Dover, and presented herself at the Custom-house. She was not troubled with many new dresses, and even the sharks of the Customs could not lessen her fortune by placing an *ad valorem* duty upon a bonnet. A porter carried her baggage, and directed her to a small inn not far from the ship. It was dark, the streets greasy and wet, and the dim light of the lamps shone not with sufficient lustre to show the face of a female who walked close by her, and who stopped at a little distance from a brilliant apothecary's shop in order to scrutinise Louisa's features as she passed the light. The stranger then crossed the street, and continued to watch her until she was safely lodged in the small inn.

The agitation of Louisa's mind perhaps is a sufficient reason why she did not more particularly observe this stranger ; but towards nine o'clock, and previous to her going to bed, she chanced to look from her window, and there opposite the house were Cavendish and her former servant, whose figure she could not fail to recognise. Her curiosity made her watch them ; and in order to do so unobserved, she extinguished the lights, and by degrees managed to open a little of the window. It was evident to her that they wished to ascertain if she was going on to London that night ; for when ten o'clock struck and the mail drove off, she heard Cavendish say, 'She is safe until to-morrow, so good night,' and immediately afterwards, they separated. It must be owned that many females would not altogether dislike the romantic attachment of a man who had travelled this distance with apparently one only object in view, and that object a woman : many a heart has been softened by such attention, and those who argue with Richard, that woman may sometimes be taken,

“ ‘ In her heart’s extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eye,
The bleeding witness of her hatred by,’

would not wonder if Louisa’s resentment was a little stifled by this marked attention. But she knew him well, and yet could not understand why, if his revenge had been satiated upon Harry, he should now turn round upon her. It was all in vain to think upon the subject,—that he *had* followed her was evident, and that he would continue so to do was more than reasonable.

“ The inside of the Phœnix had the honour of conveying Louisa to town. Her maid was an outside passenger, but there was no appearance of Cavendish. Louisa would have spoken to the hard-hearted Mary Lancing, and would have endeavoured to have extracted the secret of her company-keeping with Cavendish; but the coach was full inside, and no opportunity offered during the journey to put her intentions into execution. The coach drove to the Circus in Piccadilly; and on inquiry, Louisa learnt that there was an inn nearly opposite, to which she immediately went, and having engaged a room at as cheap

a rate as possible, her boxes were removed and she housed.

“ Mary had watched her, and the next day Cavendish was there. He sent her letter after letter,—he changed his manner from the haughty to the solicitous—he offered her everything but his hand, and it was quite in vain that Louisa again and again refused the proffered attention. Her object was to find her parents; and the only means to effect it was to send a boy with a note in a disguised hand to her former governess, who had left her family previously to their going abroad, and who was now living in Portland Place. The note appeared more like one from a tradesman than a lady, and the answer which fixed the fate of Louisa was, that ‘ the Stanhopes had been for some time in Paris; but that the last accounts of them were from Rome, where they intended to stay the winter.’

“ It was not until this moment that Louisa wavered. She had now no living soul to whom she could apply; she did not know my address; and it was not likely that the father would countenance the frailties of the son, when

the object of charity was the cause of all his misfortunes. Cavendish still pressed his suit, and day after day saw the slender resources of Louisa gently ebbing away. She had advertised for the place of a governess; she had offered herself as a lady's-maid; she had subjected herself to the greatest annoyances; she had been rudely rejected by those her inferiors in every respect but fortune: she could give no references, she could get no character; and although blessed with every intellectual resource, she found herself gradually getting towards her last shilling. Hitherto she had paid punctually, and even now did not owe a farthing; but day after day saw the slender store reduced, and day after day she was mortified by continued refusals.

“Cavendish had scarcely ever let her out of his sight; it was now that he implored an interview; and Louisa, actually softened by attention which the most devoted lover in Christendom could not have surpassed, admitted him. In this interview Cavendish extracted from her the low state of her finances, and seemed now to starve the enemy he could not conquer. He regretted seri-

ously her forlorn condition ; he saw no chance of her success in finding a place, although Heaven knew how sincere he was in wishing her to earn an honest livelihood ; he warmly participated in her distress, and would do all he could to alleviate it ; he was unfortunately a little pressed for money himself, but he trusted that in a day or two he should be able to offer her some relief until she could be respectably provided for. Louisa was blinded by this feeling allusion to her situation ; and in the belief that Cavendish would call the next day, she continued at her lodgings until her last farthing was gone. She then procured supplies by the sale of her clothes. She could not believe even in her own destitution. She literally lived almost upon air, for she contracted all her expenses into sufficient only to keep herself alive ; but day after day passed, dress after dress had been pledged, until the once gay, beautiful, beloved Louisa—the darling of her father's house,—the life, the spirit of all society, was left with nothing but the clothes upon her back, and without one farthing in the whole world.

“She now began to despond. She had gone through four days of the week, and on the seventh she had always punctually paid : her altered appearance would have excited suspicion, and now she seldom ventured abroad, for her destitution was evident in her dress. The fatal Monday came, and with it came the bill. It is no true woman who cannot find an excuse ; and she, with the air of one who could discharge it, said, ‘ Leave it there, and I will send the money.’ But servants have quick eyes : the decrease of her wardrobe had not been unnoticed ; the maid who attended upon her knew that some of her dresses had disappeared ; and the landlord, duly informed of this, was resolved she should not escape to his disadvantage. He soon made his appearance, and on learning the truth was not slow in upbraiding her. Finding that nothing remained, he wisely thought that an empty house was better than a bad tenant, and gave her notice to quit directly. In vain she implored to be allowed to remain,—in vain she declared the respectability of her birth and her connexions, and her certainty that a friend would soon relieve her,—every fact was against her, excepting

her hitherto punctuality of payment. She was told to depart, and in sorrowful steps she was turned from the house with all her worldly goods upon her back.

“ It was about four o’clock, and winter had long since begun. Cold, biting cold blew the wind ; a small rain and thick fog contributed to render her situation truly pitiable. She stood near the door from which she had been spurned, insulted by the wanton as they passed, and rebuked by some of low habits for being in their walk. The hours crept on, and still Louisa saw no prospect of a better fate than a lock-up house. She had called, and again had been denied admission to the inn. Her tender frame, unaccustomed to exposure, would soon feel the severity of the winter’s cold ; she trembled as she wound closer and closer around her the folds of her last remaining shawl. Attracted by the beauty of her figure, several people in passing turned to look at her, and she as invariably turned away, until one more resolute than the rest took her hand and whispered in her ear—
‘ Mine at last !’—It was Cavendish.

“ ‘ Save me, save me, Mr. Cavendish, from

the misery of this cruel night ! I am without a farthing ; I am destitute of food, of clothing : oh, hear my prayer, and turn not away from my supplications ! ’

“ ‘ It is good,’ said Cavendish in a low tone, ‘ to humble pride. My revenge now feels the thrill of delight ! Louisa at my feet, a pauper, without a home, without food, without a friend ! ’

“ ‘ Oh, say not so, Mr. Cavendish ! say not so, I implore you ! You know to what I was born, and what I had ; assist me, and every farthing shall be repaid if I work until I die.’

“ ‘ The usual tone of all you women ! ’ replied this infernal demon. ‘ You run into debt, and then you go upon the town to procure money. I have no silver about me, neither have I any halfpence ; but you are young and pretty, and cannot want long.’

“ ‘ Cruel, cruel man, thus to insult one whom you have ruined ! Even now I despise you more than I did. Restore me a guinea of the money you swindled from Harry, and relieve your conscience of some of the load which will before long press heavily upon you.’

“ ‘ A very pretty way of asking charity, upon my soul ! But I cannot remain here in the wet and cold, liable to suspicion from some of my friends who might pass in their carriages. Besides, I have to dine with Lord Plausible, and I promised to go to the theatre afterwards ; and, as our little drunken divine at Coo used to say, ‘ we must make the most of the good things of this life.’ Ah, Louisa ! you have had your swing : you remember our little drunken parson at Coo ?’

“ ‘ I can scarcely believe my ears,’ replied Louisa. ‘ You who sued for me almost on your knees—you who have followed me to this step of ruin,—you who promised to assist me but a week ago, now to taunt me with the remembrance of my happier days, and to make me feel my degradation by thus asking charity of you !’

“ ‘ Fortune’s wheel, my pretty Louisa, is always turning ; and this you know, that *any* turn it takes now must be for your welfare. I imagine you cannot be much worse than you are, and therefore I propose one alternative : I will take you to a house where some of your sex re-

side, and I dare say you will find a generous friend in the lady who keeps the establishment. Thus far I can assist you : but I again repeat, I have no time to lose, and this chilling wind cuts me in half.’

“ ‘ Then think,’ replied Louisa, ‘ what *I* suffer, deprived of half my usual garments ! But that cold is trifling to the misery I feel whilst I look around me at this town of splendour and of noise, and find myself unknown to all but yourself, and actually starving in the streets.’

“ ‘ Why don’t you get work then, and not live in idleness ?’ replied Cavendish.

“ ‘ Stop, stop, — for Heaven’s, if not for mercy’s sake, stop ! I cannot bear it. I have become a beggar to you, because I really thought that you had some regard for me. I cannot bear the insult,—I cannot longer remain to be taunted, to be thus abused. Once more I appeal to your charity, to your own feelings ; and if I fail, here will I die !’

“ ‘ Be mine, Louisa ?’

“ ‘ Never, never !’ she replied.

“ ‘ Come, I will relieve you.’

“ Louisa immediately advanced, and was about to place her arm in his, more from protection than from any familiarity ; but Cavendish, who enjoyed the misery of his victim, instantly withdrew his, saying, ‘ Follow me ? Good God ! what would my friends think if I were seen walking arm-in-arm with you !’

“ Vain, very vain would be the attempt to describe the feelings of this poor girl. She was a woman of more spirit than I ever remembered to have seen,—for *I have* seen her : she would have sacrificed her life any minute in the day for the man she loved ; she could brave danger few would face ; and had she not lost that gem which adorns the female, and which hurls her from society when it is lost, she might have been justly the envy of her sex. Believe not this, Robert, the tale of an old imbecile ; every word is strictly, religiously true. She lives at this moment, rescued from her degradation and restored to her family.

“ ‘ Whither are you leading me, Mr. Cavendish ? I cannot go much farther ; for if you leave me I shall lose my way in these alleys and courts.’

“Cavendish stopped, and then said, ‘I really cannot provide for you now—I forgot I was to dine early—you must walk about and keep yourself warm by exercise; here is sixpence, and if everybody gave you as much you would be richer than I am. It’s coming on to rain quite hard; I dare say you wish you were in your snug warm apartments in the Hôtel de Flandre—you were comfortable enough then. Now hear me, Louisa: you *despised* me, now I shall see you by to-morrow as despicable as woman can be—your darling Harry is now reveling in luxury, you are starving—your seducer is in warmth and comfort, you in coldness and despair. Good night.’ And he called a coach, into which he jumped and left her.

“Louisa was now alone. She walked in solitude; she saw about her those who abandoned themselves—who yielded to their appetites; she heard the language from which decency turns her ear, and modesty is startled and alarmed: whichever way she walked, she met with insult from the men, and abuse from her own sex; and needless, of course, it is for me to shadow her feelings—her bitter feelings and remorse. She had walked until eleven at night, and was then

near St. James's Palace. She turned to the right, ascended St. James's Street, and then taking Piccadilly, she walked on at a rapid pace, not knowing where she was going, until she came to Park Lane; and as at that time the brilliancy of gas-lights were unknown, that street assumed a dark and melancholy appearance.

“ I have reason to remember Park Lane; for had not my legs been good, I should have left the contents of my pocket in a stranger's hand. There is, not far from where the houses end on the Park side, a small lane which terminates in a mews, and on its left is a flight of steps leading into Curzon Street. On these steps at midnight was seated the once envied Louisa. The weather had continued to grow worse; the wind was high, the rain more constant, the cold more intense. In vain she now had recourse to prayer—in vain she turned over and over in her mind the thousand ways by which the millions in this world gain a livelihood; at this hour of the night she knew she could not appeal to the affluent—she knew not where to apply, and all the natural resources of her mind failed to

offer relief. The drowsy watchman as he passed her said,

“ ‘ Why, young woman, I think you had better go home.’ ”

“ She looked up, and in a faint voice said, ‘ I have no home.’ ”

“ ‘ No home ? Why, where do you live ?’ ”

“ ‘ Here,’ replied the poor creature.

“ ‘ Lord bless me,’ continued the watchman, ‘ how ’toxication is gaining ground !’ and walked on.

“ The guardian returned, having called out ‘ Past twelve, and a cloudy night.’ ‘ What, still here !’ said he, shaking her gently by the shoulder. ‘ Why don’t you go home ? I say, you mustn’t be laying about the steps in this way,—you must go home, or I must take you to the watch-house.’ Saying which, he placed his lantern near her face and discovered her fair features. ‘ Why, what a pity surely ! and such a pretty girl, too ! Why, this is a bad station you have taken.’ ”

“ Whilst this was going forward, and the night-guardian was becoming a little amorous, three or four young men in high spirits were heard advancing, and the watchman left Louisa and continued his rounds.

“ ‘For the love of Heaven, have pity, gentlemen, upon the most miserable of human creatures !’ said Louisa, as two of the party approached ; but as they gained the steps, one said : ‘ Well, good night, Charles, I shall see you early to-morrow ;’ to which the other replied, ‘ God bless you ! and take my advice, leave off that private play, it will ruin you, as it has done thousands.’ A thrill, an indescribable thrill ran through the veins of Louisa ; she felt as if hope from being crushed had sprung into new existence, and as the stranger was about to descend the steps, she said : ‘ He who can give such good advice to a friend, will not deny his counsel to the afflicted.’ ”

“ Struck by the very unusual appeal, and from one who seemed the lowest of the low, Charles stopped. There was something in the tone of voice which caught his attention : there was a sort of sublimity in the mode of soliciting charity, that he, of a sound and curious mind, could not have passed. ‘ In what way can I by my advice serve you, my little girl ?’ said Charles kindly. ‘ Why, you look, as far as one can guess from that lamp’s assistance, both young and in sad dis-

tress ; and from the manner you have used in addressing me, you must have seen better days.'

" These were the first kind words that Louisa had heard since her actual misery ; and they came, too, in a voice of benevolence, and a voice which seemed familiar to her ear. She burst into tears, and replied : ' I am an outcast ;—I, who have known splendour, have now no bed on which to lay my exhausted frame—no home to shelter me from this cruel night.'

" ' Who and what are you ?' said Charles.

" ' A daughter of affliction—one who suffered her love to conquer her discretion ; who has been left by him who ruined her, and who is now an outcast and a pauper.'

" ' Ah, that appeal shall not be in vain to me !' replied Charles ; ' for at this moment, my own, my dear Louisa may be a forlorn wretch !—Good God ! what ails you ? Let me lift you again. Here, watchman, bring your lantern here.'

" ' Nay, nay, do not let him come. I fell from weakness. I was afraid you were going to harrow my very soul by some recital. But do not—and that name too—it cannot be !'

“ ‘Most heartily glad I am to see you so moved; it is a sign of a repentant spirit. I am no clergyman, but, thank God! I am a man. If my own dear sister could but be reclaimed, even by the vicissitudes of fortune which you have undergone, I would receive her, and even Harry should be forgiven.’

“ Louisa leaped upon her feet, and turning the stranger towards the light, looked for a second upon his face, and falling with her arms round his neck, exclaimed, ‘Charles Stanhope, forgive—forgive your sister!’

“ ‘I need tell you no more,’ continued the good old man as he wiped the tears from his face.

“ ‘I knew that Charles Stanhope, who had entered the army shortly after my son first became acquainted with him in Paris, was in London; and on my return to England after the burial of Harry, I hastened to discover his abode. I found him with Louisa under his roof. I did all that wealth and affluence could do to restore her to her former position—I placed her in independence; and I have thus endeavoured to make some trifling amends for the in-

jury she sustained by my son's conduct. She is since married. She has lived to see Cavendish altered in his dress and manner, almost a vagrant on the parish ; nay, he has even solicited charity from her—he has sued to her he nearly ruined ; and I loved Louisa with a father's love when I heard that she had discovered the almost unknown retreat of that ruined scoundrel, and had sent him some money, with merely these words in the envelope, ‘ From Louisa Stanhope to Mr. Cavendish.’

“ Robert, in this world true is the Scripture — ‘ Man is born unto misery as the sparks fly upwards.’ It is our duty to live for others as well as ourselves ; and let me implore you not to spurn the abject creature of distress, or insult the fallen by ridiculing their miseries ; and be this engraven in your heart, that when it shall please God to bless you with a wife and a family, beware of the danger of idleness ; implant in your children a due and proper sense of religion,—teach them to be *honourable* ; make it their boast to be gentlemen in the fullest acceptation of the term : and remember, that early habits of rever-

ence to God and obedience to their parents is best inculcated by example ; for true is the saying of Johnson, ‘ Religion, the rewards of which are distant, and which are animated merely by faith and hope, would glide by degrees from the mind if they were not reinvigorated and reimpresed by constant calls to worship, and by the salutary influence of *example*.’

“And now good night ! You have a spice of the proper gentleman in your manner—you know that it is not the coat which makes the man ; and little did you dream when you opened your pew-door to the poor, old, and apparently wretched, pilgrim, that you admitted a man who could command every luxury in life, but who cannot enjoy them. Here I could remain——”

“Then do remain,” interrupted Robert. “Here you are welcome : whatever I have is at your service.”

“Many thanks to you, Robert !—may God bless you, and grant you happiness in this life ! Good night again. Do not alarm yourself if you hear me moving during the night : I am an old curiosity, and must have my way. Good night !”

CHAPTER X.

ROBERT felt considerably relieved when the old gentleman left him and retired to rest. The story of Harry and Louisa struck deep in his heart; and when he turned in a restless, feverish manner upon his pillow, he thought of the rascality of the man who thus could use a woman. O that he had treasured up the sayings of that man in his heart! O that he had never left him! His resolutions as to future conduct were like the repentance of the sick reprobate: relieve him of his malady, and his evil propensities return; physic him back into health, and you purge out his penitence. Sad picture of human frailties, but not overdrawn.

Douglass awoke rather later the following morning, and to his surprise learned that his old friend had departed—not this life, but from his house. The maid told him, that about six

o'clock she found the gentleman in the hall, with the portmanteau packed, and brushing—if it is not a Hibernicism — his hat with a silk handkerchief. He desired her always to use her master's the same way : “brushes are bad things,” he said, “and only invented by tailors to ruin clothes before they were half worn out.” He put five shillings into the girl's hands, and said, —“Now tell your master to remember me ; but I desire you will not awake him, and tell him that I have left his house. Thank you, my pretty lass, I will carry my own portmanteau ;—so, here I am outside, and God bless the owner ! for I have had more real pleasure in this house, humble as it is, than in the costly palace I call my own. Do you, Mary, give my kindest remembrance to your master, and tell him he shall hear from me when he least expects it. Good-b'ye, my little rosy-faced damsel ! Why, you look like the first blush of dawn upon a spring morning ! If I had your health and happiness, you might have my age and purse—and I should be a gainer by the exchange.”

“Have you any idea, Mary, what may be his name ?” asked Douglass.

“No, sir,” replied the little servant, who had been much flattered by the old man’s compliments, and who exulted in her riches—her crown,—“No, sir, I never could find out ; and although I did use the privilege of our sex, curiosity, yet all I could discover were the letters on a pocket-handkerchief which he one morning forgot to put in his pocket : they were worked in the same coloured silk as the pocket-handkerchief itself, and I made out a B and an H ; and on his portmanteau, just over the lock, and under the leather, was a small round plate with an H upon it.”

“Did you never see any letters of his, Mary ?” continued Douglass ; “for you seem to have made use of your eyes. Did you never see any papers,—in short, anything that had his name upon it ?”

“Never, sir, and I am sure I tried all I could ; for he was so kind in his manner to me, that I wanted very much to remember his name.”

“Just run over to the inn, and find out if he went by the Cheltenham coach,” said Douglass ; “or if he went in a post-chaise ;—in short,

find out all you can about him. But stop,—put the kettle on the hob first, and get breakfast.”

Robert looked at the vacant place at his table as a kind husband does when his wife has deserted him: he seemed to have lost a companion that he had known for years. For the last two days he had assumed a kind of parental sway, and had managed the fire and the coal-skuttle as if they were his own property: he certainly hardly fed the fire, and nearly starved his host with cold.

Mary's return produced no desirable communication. “He had gone by one of the early coaches, not to Cheltenham, but to London. They knew nothing about him, and wanted if possible to know less. They wondered how a gentleman who had always behaved himself as such could house and feed such a miserable curmudgeon, and allow such a skinflint to peck and perch in his roost.”

“Very well,” thought Douglass to himself, “the world may scoff and sneer, the old maids may turn up their eyes and their noses, but I shall ever be proud of having given that old man the

run of my house: he has at any rate, to use the language of the author he always quoted, ‘given an ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth.’ His story is worth all the wine he drank; and as for any other expense, he saved it all in the coals and the candles. If I follow his advice, I shall be the better man; and for once I have found out it is not exactly true, ‘that advice when asked is seldom well received; and when it *is not asked*, it is decidedly impertinent.’”

Thus Robert continued moralizing and tacking together “wise saws and modern instances,” until he remembered that four days had passed, and that he had never visited Margaret Anson, the prettiest girl in the village, and one, to say the truth, with whom he fancied himself very much in love. Until the old gentleman called, he had never missed a day without blockading the high street, or occasionally stopping close to the little garden-gate which led to the neat cottage in which was domiciled his only hope.

The Ansons were of good birth, and could trace back, by the means of old books, and now

and then a straggling warrior, a clear descent,—clear at least to them,—from the Conqueror; and throughout the many ramifications of that old tree of genealogy in all its shoots and branches, it may be questioned if it ever shot out a leaf so beautifully formed, so exquisitely fashioned, as Margaret. She was tall, or rather above the middle stature of women; she had large dark blue eyes, with dark brown hair—nay, almost a black, which gave her countenance a light of fire when she blazed up, as she sometimes did, that could not fail to produce a most vivid sensation. But, alas! how very often do we see in human life the picture of Margaret! How often do we see the gayest dressed man—the dandy covered with chains and rings, bedizened with worked waistcoats and satin,—the one whose pocket and whose brain is the most shallow! Many may have seen, when shawl after shawl in all their splendour have been unrolled,—when silk wrapper after silk wrapper has been unwound, the dead, cold, disgusting corpse of a Tartar; and may know that, in spite of the gold which surrounds its surface, how bitter is the pill concealed beneath?

“Such was Margaret,—a splendid casket containing a coal. She had the fairest form and loveliest face that man ever dared to dote upon; but she was idle, selfish, proud, morose. Margaret knew no pleasure but in society; to be condemned to her own resources was a curse she avoided by sleep. She was one of those mealy women, who, in spite of clear skins and vivid eyes, are strangers to the genial warmth of love, and never feel its influence saving when it gratifies their vanity.

“Robert did not know her then, but he has since known her better: bitterly has he repented the re-continuation of his visits after the departure of the old man. He loved,—at least he thought so: he could never bring himself to any useful occupation; and he dissembled when he appeared to read and study in the society of the old gentleman;—wherever he fixed his eyes, there were Margaret’s; and although he was blind as regarded her beauty, yet he was not blind to the situation in which he stood: he felt himself tolerated rather than encouraged; when no other man could be found to dawdle out the hours,

Douglass was considered as a convenient friend, whose poverty would starve love, and who would never venture to offer a hand which held not a heavy purse ;—in short, he was considered much in the light that the Author of “*The Life of a Sailor*” has ventured to pourtray midshipmen in 1809, — “*Kind of dogs to fetch and carry.*” He walked in and out of the house like a tame rabbit, and was believed as timid and as innocent as Joseph ; but his timidity arose from love,—he was miserable when absent from her. He did not dare to venture an offer, because he saw that whenever a popinjay with long spurs and dyed moustache made his appearance, he was decoyed by the old mother, whilst Margaret’s eyes were turned as a breaching battery against the outworks of the soldier’s heart. Robert has since believed that these men saw through the frail covering of Margaret ; for although many flirted, not one offered. They say hunger can tame a lion, and also, that if you tread on a worm it will turn. Oh, how long—how many months did Robert hunger after Margaret ! He watched her steps with rap-

ture; day after day he visited the cottage—he watched for some favourable symptom, he looked for some responding glances, he listened for some unexpected sigh. He might have watched, and looked, and listened until Doomsday,—Margaret’s heart was occupied solely by itself; and she regarded him more as a useful appendage than dreamt of him as a lover. Douglass had often met with rebukes and rebuffs in the unguarded hints of one or two of the Ansons; but Margaret had been either too kind or too sleepy to give vent to her feelings. Upon the subject of the old man, he had however some few difficulties to overcome. Some of his very best friends took the trouble to circulate that the account Robert gave of his own family was all false; that the strange man who had excited such attention in the village was his father, who had just met with some reverses in his business, being by trade a kind of *omnium gatherum* trader, and had visited his son in the hopes of getting some little assistance. The charge was supported more upon circumstantial than positive evidence; but your old tattlers and retailers of scandal or in-

sults prefer the former to the latter;—it gives such scope to the imagination, it supplies a better field for the war of words, and it gives a value to a whisper, which otherwise might have “died unheard away.”

“If it had been a respectable friend,” quoth one, “he would have trotted him to the cottage, and saved himself and his red-armed servant from the expense and trouble of a dinner.”

“Ay,” replied a second; “and he would not have moped all day in his narrow cell like a monk at his confession, had he not been ashamed of his father, and willing to avoid interrogation.”

So that whilst Douglass was cherishing an old friend of his father’s—whilst he was making an old and infirm man enjoy some of the blessings of this life, he was incurring all the malice, all the venom of a female community.

The attorney of the village, about as great a rogue as that honourable society can boast, only shook his head and observed, “Poor fellow! it is not his fault if his father is a hawker of rags about town; no man is responsible for the

birth of his sire." The parson, who was an honest, excellent person, asked what it could signify to others if Mr. Douglass chose to feed the decrepit, or extend his charity to the infirm. But amongst the women he lost considerable ground, — firstly, for having done a good action in admitting the stranger to his pew, which was called vanity; and secondly, for having forced himself into their society under false colours.

Robert could not but observe this: the alteration in the nods of the ladies was evident; he was never asked to join the attorney and the doctor at whist, nor was he ever favoured after church with the friendly bow of acquaintance; the fact is, he was nearly sent to Coventry, and by being still admitted to the Ansons, nearly bred a division in that once peaceful neighbourhood.

One day in spring, for the winter had passed and he had been neglected, when he was walking by the side of Margaret, and making all manner of pretty speeches, she suddenly turned round, and looking him full in the face, said—
“ Pray Robert,” (she always called him Robert,)

“ who was that old man who visited you for four days in November last ? ”

“ Why really, Margaret,” he answered, (observe the familiarity,) “ I do not know.”

“ Nonsense ! ” retorted the girl : “ you ought to be ashamed to deny one whom you must know ! ”

“ That may all be very just as a remark,” he interrupted ; “ but it is a fact that I can put my hand upon my heart and solemnly swear that I do not know his name, his calling, or his abode.”

“ Well, Robert, I am sorry to hear you say so, as it must breed a little distrust between us : I cannot pay you so bad a compliment as to believe you would admit a stranger whom you never saw in your life into your house, or that you are quite such a fool as to think we believe it.”

“ I am sure, Margaret,” he replied, not a little hurt by the remark, “ that I have never since I had the pleasure of knowing you—and a great and real pleasure it has been—told you one word of untruth ; and I repeat again, that I never saw

that man before or since his visit here ; that I do not know his name ; and that my servant, as inquisitive as most of your sex, failed also to arrive at this desirable knowledge ;—nay, if you distrust me, perhaps you will credit her.”

“ Upon your honour and word,” said Margaret, looking right through him with those beautiful eyes of hers, “ is not that dirty old man your father ?”

Robert looked at her in cool disgust before he answered the question. “ Margaret,” he said, for his blood was up, — “ Margaret, you believe me as false as yourself !” She started with astonishment. “ Nay, hear me out,” he continued. “ You hear me pledge the honour and word of a gentleman that I do not know this person ; and you then, having evidently stamped me as a liar in your own mind, ask me if he is not my father. Could I by any subterfuge, by any compromise of conscience, if that man were my father, say that I did not know either his name, his calling, or his abode ?”

“ Every one in the village,” continued Margaret, “ thinks him your father ; and they say

that you are not the person you represent yourself to be. It is the generally circulated report that has made me ask the question ; and although you pledge your word and your honour, which I am bound to believe, yet I say it again, that I never thought you such a noodle before."

"And can you," he replied, "listen to all the rubbish which idle women think proper to talk? Rely upon this, Margaret," he said as he took her hand, "that I never have told you a falsehood, and that all I say or do when by your side is guided by sincerity and truth." Margaret looked up, and Robert felt his heart bumping about like a parched pea upon a drumhead.

It has been remarked before now, that the greater the excitement, the greater is the reaction ; and those are trivial observers of life who fail in seeing that a woman's heart becomes the softest immediately after she has steelled it in obduracy. Hence women who resolve not to accept a man wind themselves up to the refusal, and the next second burst into tears. This is a natural reaction, and *not* hypocrisy, as has been averred.

There was a kind of melting softness in Margaret's eyes : she looked at Douglass as much as to compassionate him for the virulence of the slander he had undergone, and he felt that now was the time to make the most rapid advances. He had for the last six months taken every opportunity of admiring her beauty ; he had painted her as the perfection of a woman, although he was not blind to her occasional coolness. This, lover-like, he twisted into a trial of his affection, and never once thought it could arise from a chilliness of heart or an utter want of passion. The enemy—that is, her natural apathy—was now off his guard ; she seemed warmed, perhaps by his refutation of the report, and being conscious—for she had a little of that common commodity—that she had insulted him, she felt inclined to soften the asperities and to acknowledge the reaction. “A faint heart,” he said to himself, “never won a fair lady : now is the time ; this is the tide which taken in the flood leads on to glory ; here's a chance, here's an opening, and by —— I'll try !” At this moment he quite forgot how unlikely it was that a girl of eigh-

teen, with a beauty rarely equalled and never surpassed, would relinquish all worldly ambition and sink down as the quiet wife of Robert Douglass, he being then in possession of one hundred and fifty pounds a year. Love is blind.

He held Margaret's hand, and returned the gaze of those beautiful blue eyes ;—he thought he never saw her look so pretty as in that plain straw bonnet with the pink riband : he held her hand, and throwing all his soul into his eyes, began to break ground. “ Margaret,”—he said, and there he came to a full halt. She looked at him as much as to say, “ Go on.” Robert gently squeezed her hand—he felt a kind of convulsive return. “ Margaret,”—he began again.—

“ Robert,”—she said.

“ Margaret, can you listen to me ?”

“ To be sure I can : Robert, do you think I am deaf ?”

Robert felt as if the old enemy was coming back to her protection.

“ Margaret,” (the third time is always the strongest,) he began again, “ I told you before that I never mentioned one word to you which

was not strictly true ; and now I tell you another truth I have longed many times to divulge. Look at this dear little hand in mine, Margaret." She looked upon it as if it had been a stone. "Do you see how well formed mine is to hold and to protect it?"

"Yes," said she.

Robert startled and continued : "Then accept mine as the protector of yours. Oh, make me really happy ! Whatever I have is yours. Say, say you love me,—say you accept me as your husband." She looked at him for some time : they say, if a woman considers, she is lost. Robert trembled with anxiety ; he felt his limbs totter beneath their weight ; he watched every glance—the murder was out, he had spoken, and now his doom was about to be completed. He was afraid the poor girl would have fainted ; he was ready to catch the falling angel in his arms ; he was in the horror of suspense, when she turned short round upon her heel, burst out a-laughing, and ran home, leaving Robert like a statue fixed to the ground, and looking at the flying figure of the nymph.

It would not be a very pleasant amusement to

rummage recollection for the bitter feeling of disappointment, wounded pride, or crushed hope, which overcame him ; but such was his very unusual manner at dinner, that even Mary was struck into such a heap, that she thought him, what he certainly was for the moment, mad. A note, however, from the cottage, begging him to spend the evening there, reanimated him ; although he might have seen that the invitation placed his tamed-rabbit visits rather out of the question for the future.

Mrs. Anson was a kind woman, and knew how to feel for others, for she had suffered herself when her husband died ;—she knew by experience how hard it is to part with one we love ; and she could likewise imagine that a man might feel a rebuke of love, and feel it deeply. Margaret had told the whole story just as unconcerned as if Robert had offered her an unripe pear and she had refused it ; she had entered into all the particulars without the slightest emotion, and not knowing the power of feeling, she could not credit that she had inflicted any pain upon another. Robert accepted this invitation, for hope

seemed concealed in Pandora's box ; he thought all the evil was out, and that her mother might have altered the determination of the daughter. Margaret met him at the door with her usual welcome : she asked him if he remained long in the field after she left him ; and if he had not been blinded by her beauty, he might have known her for the heartless, worthless creature he afterwards found her. Mrs. Anson took him aside, and in the kindest manner offered a palliative for her daughter's behaviour : she said, that for herself and her daughter she could answer, by saying that Margaret had never observed any particular alteration on Robert's part ; and that the frequent intimacy for such a length of time without any declaration, was a sufficient proof to them that he had no serious intentions : she then, as kindly as woman can speak about insuperable objections, mentioned his fortune, and her knowledge that he had no expectation for the future ; and, after a vast number of compliments to himself, declared that Margaret still highly valued his friendship, although she hoped he would never mention the subject of love any more. Once or twice a

lurking hint about the old gentleman convinced Robert that she had been infected by the surrounding scandal, and that although she spoke in honeyed accents, yet that she believed him to be very little better than a common impostor.

“My dear Robert,” she said, as she laid her hand upon his shoulder in the most friendly manner possible, “you must know that a girl of Margaret’s beauty naturally looks a little above the humdrum life of a village like this. It is true we see very little company ; but next year I intend to take my children to town :—it is a duty I owe her, who certainly is very far above the common herd of woman-kind, to give her a chance of success in life ; and I know I am speaking to a reasonable person, who, although a little smitten by charms irresistible, yet has control enough over himself to be absent for four days, when he was merely engaged by an elderly *gentleman*,” (she laid a particular emphasis on that word,) “to whom he was a perfect stranger, and, I am given to understand, remains so now.”

“I understand you perfectly, Mrs. Anson,” replied Robert, “I assure you ; and kind as has

been your manner in thus giving me to understand that I have no prospect of success hereafter, yet I cannot help lamenting that you cling to some sinister idea relative to that old man, who was a friend of my father's, and to whom I extended the little civility I had to offer."

"Oh, then you did know him?" she hastily replied.

"No, indeed I did not," said Robert; "and if at this moment I were to be hung at the gallows, and the naming of that man's name would save me, I should be hung to a certainty." She turned away with an incredulous sneer, and Robert saw his sentence of exclusion written legibly enough on the countenance of his dear friend Mrs. Anson.

It happened about four months afterwards, that one or two young men dropped in to Mrs. Anson's, and Robert was one of the party. After that once national, and now doubly national beverage, since it is picked from our own hedges—tea, a dance was proposed, and Robert stood up opposite to Margaret in a state of utter despondency. He thought it was for the last time that

he should touch her hand ; and although he did not feel any particular angry feeling against her or her mother, yet he felt mortified that he was so long discredited : it was evident that the old ragman was believed to be his sire, and that from his situation in life he was ashamed of his parent. In the course of a man's life, he must face many miseries, and be occasionally supremely unfortunate ; but it is a strange fact, that no calamity ever overtakes us without our being forewarned that something is about to occur. A man still exists who once stumbled into law, and although he felt his case was sure, if truth and justice could avail, yet before he went into court he remarked to the attorney, " It is no use, I *feel* I am to lose it ;" and he did. A month previously to this, and the same trial, when the morning came on which that case was to be heard, he said, " I will lay thousands that I am not beat this day : " the trial was postponed, and both warnings proved correct. Let not the hasty reader brand this as a boyish superstition ; our greatest heroes have been forewarned of their fate, and have been shot the

same evening. Nelson had a tinge of this at Trafalgar, and Sir Peter Parker openly expressed it the night of his death.

They had danced one quadrille, and Robert had lugged his legs after him something like a sweep does his broom, when he felt a lightness of heart for which he could not account. Although in the titters of the girls and the looks of the men he could see that he was the object of distrust and remark, yet suddenly he felt an elasticity of mind which a Londoner feels when hastily removed to Paris. He laughed and flirted, and, in spite of all untoward events, he never felt happier in his life. About eleven o'clock the dance was done, the tray brought, and silence succeeded the noise of youth and merriment. It was during that pause, that the servant entered, and said that Mr. Douglass was wanted immediately at home,—that a gentleman had arrived from London in great haste, and begged that Mr. Douglass would see him directly.

To the inquiries, Robert only learned that the stranger was a middle-aged man, that he came down post, and had not arrived more than

five minutes. In a country village, a post-chaise is an object of scrutiny by day ; but when it comes in the shape of a despatch by night, every tongue is sure to be employed in giving forth opinions upon the object. The carriage and horses had gone to the Elephant and Dormouse, and curiosity was strongly excited. Robert advanced to shake hands for the last time, as he thought, with Mrs. Anson. He remarked a considerable change in her manner ; she seemed softened down a little, and hoped Robert would call to-morrow. Even Margaret was kind, and in the expression that she hoped nothing serious had occurred, betrayed a momentary feeling for his interest, and, he thought, welfare in life.

CHAPTER XI.

ROBERT's house was not more than five hundred yards from the cottage, and he took about two hops, skips, and jumps to arrive at the door. Here he found a short pragmatical-looking man in full possession of the fire, rubbing his hands and looking quite at home. On Robert's entrance he rose, and having asked him if he was Mr. Robert Douglass, the son of John Douglass deceased, he gave him a very smiling look, and told him that he had come post to see him, having business of great importance to transact.

"In the first place, sir," he said to Robert, "it is my duty to ask you some few questions, which I trust you will do me the favour to answer." Douglass nodded assent, and he proceeded. "Pray, sir, were you ever acquainted with one Mr. Benjamin Houghton?"

“Never, sir,” replied Douglass; “I have never had the honour of knowing any such person, I assure you.” And Robert began to look round his room to see that none of his furniture had walked.

“I think, sir,” replied the little quiz, “you must be labouring under some mistake, for I am sure *I* have made none. Is not this your name, the name and number of your street, the village in which you reside, the name of your father and your family?”

Douglass looked at the memorandum, which was made in a pocket-book, and then regarding his visitor full in the face, (he could have pocketed *him* had it been requisite,) he answered, “Yes, sir, most certainly, this can be meant for no other than myself.”

“If, sir,” continued the stranger, “you have any letter directed to you which may have come by the post, will you be kind enough to show me the direction?”

“To be sure I will,” replied Robert, opening his desk and handing out one, which the little gentleman ran his eye over and returned

to him, saying, "Are you quite sure, sir, you do not know any person of the name of Benjamin Houghton?"

"I am just as certain, sir, as that I have the honour of seeing you before me," replied Douglass. "To the best of my knowledge and belief, I only have had one person besides yourself inside these doors with whose name I was not acquainted; and he was an old gentleman to whom I offered some civility."

"Is it long, sir, since he left you?" continued the stranger.

"It may be now about three or four months," was replied.

"Will you describe him, if you please? for I fancy this is the same gentleman," resumed the stranger.

Robert did so in no very good humour; for he by no means relished this kind of examination, and certainly was not in the vein to be over and above civil to this stranger, for he put the questions to him as a matter of right, which Robert did not comprehend.

"I am satisfied," replied the stranger, "that

we have made no mistake. And now, sir, I shall, after apologising for what may seem a liberty, convey to you a piece of intelligence which I hope may convince you that my questions were absolutely necessary. I am, sir, the solicitor of the late Mr. Benjamin Houghton; and I have no doubt, from his general eccentric manner, that he for some purpose,—perhaps the unfortunate death of his son, who committed suicide in Paris,—concealed his name. He has indeed for some few years been a kind of wandering hermit——”

“ He used to call himself a pilgrim,” Robert interrupted.

“ You are right, sir, and he seldom remained long in one place.” Here the solicitor paused.

“ He has been the cause of great anxiety to me,” replied Robert; “ for, from the negligence of his dress, his peculiarity as to carrying his own portmanteau, and the cautious manner, when he related the whole circumstance of his son’s connexion with Miss Louisa Stanhope, of concealing his name, I have been unable to contradict the malicious scandal which idle women have circulated very much to my injury; they

have, in the plenitude of their goodness, called him a hawking pedlar, and dubbed the good old soul as my father. He appeared to me to be a gentleman by birth and manner, although sadly soured by the world."

"I wish he had been my father," replied the solicitor; "and I have no doubt that you will have no cause to regret your civility and your attention to him. But to the point: he is dead——"

"I am truly sorry to hear it," replied Robert; "for I grew much attached to him, and the contentment he seemed to enjoy in my society made me anxious to see him again."

"Of course, sir, you are already prepared to hear that he has left you some money."

"Some trifling mark of his esteem, I suppose," said Douglass, "and for which I confess myself thankful, however little it may be. You see here, sir, all my worldly goods; and you will do me the favour of remaining here to-night, so I shall take the liberty of ordering my spare bed to be ready." He then rang the bell; and Mary, who had been listening at the door, and

caught the sound of money left—dead old gentleman, &c. appeared instantly to attend the summons.

“Of this money,” Robert said, “we can talk to-morrow, for I suppose you are rather tired.”

“You certainly, Mr. Douglass, take things as coolly as any philosopher. You are aware, I suppose, that Mr. Houghton died very rich indeed?”

“I am in remembrance of his having spoken once or twice of his fortune,” replied Douglass, “and that he would willingly give every farthing to restore his son to life; but as to the amount, I can form no estimate whatever,—from his dress he was no Cræsus.”

“It was his dress and abstemious manner of life which made him the rich man he was,” continued the solicitor: “his property has wonderfully increased during its nursing.”

“I hope he has provided for Louisa,” remarked Robert; “for although I have never seen her, yet from his account she must have suffered much from the behaviour of his son.

He often mentioned his having done all that fortune could do to restore her to her proper position."

"He has not neglected her; for after some few trifling legacies, one of which is to myself," said the stranger, "he has left his fortune between Louisa and *yourself*."

"Sir?" said Robert.

"You will find yourself by these presents," said the little man, smiling, "in possession of £70,000."

"Damnation!" said Robert; and he jumped up and kissed the attorney. He thought he was mad, and got up in the corner; but Robert caught him by the coat: "Sit down," said he,— "out with it all;" and then looking him full in the face, said, "Are you quite certain you are not humbugging me?"

"Humbugging you, sir!" replied the solicitor, returning his look. "I tell you, sir, I am his solicitor, his executor, his oldest friend, and now come down to do the last act honourably,—to put you into quiet possession, to take you to town to-morrow, and——"

“To give me your advice, my friend,” interrupted Robert,—“to check my first lavish expenditure; to teach me not to rush into extremes,—in short, to be *my solicitor, my friend.*”

“I’m sure I shall be most happy; and as I have no reason to disguise my name—for I defy the devil himself, although I am an attorney,—I introduce myself to you as Mr. Verity, of the firm of Verity, Honor, and Co., Argyle Street.”

“Now, Mr. Verity, I’ll have some supper,” said Robert; “and you and I will break through all steady habits and crack a bottle. Seventy thousand pounds and Margaret Anson!”

“No, sir; Louisa Stanhope.”

“Yes, I forgot.—Mary, have you any meat in the house?” said Robert, almost pulling the bell down.

“No,” replied the servant; “I ate the last of the cold steak you left at dinner.”

“Cold steak!” said Robert, laughing: “go and buy me the whole of Cleaver’s shop, and dress it for supper.”

“Nay, nay,” interrupted Verity; “here I

begin my advice and open my account. Mary, run to the inn and desire them to send a plate of ham and a cold fowl."

"Money, sir, if you please," said Mary, curtsying and looking at Robert.

"I have not enough about me to jingle upon a tombstone," replied Douglass: "tell them I'll pay them to-morrow."

"No, no," said Verity: "I thought you might want some supplies, so I brought you down fifty pounds. Here, Mary, my child, take this sovereign and pay for it: and be back as soon as possible, for it grows late, and I must return to town early to-morrow."

"Order four horses to be here with this gentleman's carriage at ten precisely," said Robert. "I vow I will go out of this scandalous parish with a flourish. Now, Mr. Verity, it is no use your holding up your hands like a rope-dancer trying to keep his balance; for if you knew how I have been insulted, abused, reviled, rejected, you would say it was innocent revenge, which will cost my enemies no money and me no concern."

“ On this point as you like, then, Mr. Douglass; but I suppose you intend to return and look after your furniture, and to dispose of the lease of your house? Take care, with all your luck, you don't fall into a lawsuit, — that's the worst suit any man can wear.”

“ Well, if I do, Mr. Verity, I shall fall into honourable hands, for I must employ you,” replied Douglass.

“ The less chance you will have of gaining the day then,” continued the solicitor. “ If you want to defend an action at common law, go to Furnival's Inn, and hunt up the readiest rogue of the batch. But I will take care of you in this respect, at least concerning your house.”

“ Here's the supper,” said Douglass; “ and here's Mary laughing and chuckling like a young magpie. Come, spread it out, my lass;—here, take the keys and rummage the cellar,—don't be shy, hand up all you can find—I fancy there is not enough to make a lady drunk.—And now, Mr. Verity, for your account of the last moments of Mr. Benjamin Houghton. You know, of course, that I only saw him for four days in my life,

and that under peculiar circumstances ; so that if I do appear rather in high spirits at my good fortune, I am sure you will do me the credit to absolve me from all hypocrisy. If I were to begin and cry and sigh, to rend my heart and tear my garments,—or, as was done by an ancient people, root out my hair,—why, you would believe me to be a snivelling fellow in whom no confidence could be placed. I liked old Benjamin, both himself and his upper garment of the same name ; he might have lived longer, and I should not have repined,—he might have returned to my humble dwelling and been welcome : but since it has pleased God to take him, and pleased him to leave me some of his money, why I am sorry he is gone if he wished to live, but glad as to the result. And so I make a clean confession to my legal adviser.”

“ Spoken out boldly, like a conscientious evidence which it is no use cross-examining,” replied Verity : “ I can enter into your feelings. The poor old gentleman, after he left you in November last, returned to town and made a new will. He remained only long enough for the

document to be prepared and signed: he put it into my hands and said, ‘I have always respected you for your candour and your honesty: I leave this with you,—no soul breathing is aware of its contents but yourself; it will therefore rest with you to act up to the spirit of the dead. Now, good-b’ye! you will never see me again, for I feel I have not long to live: however, if I do send for you, mind and be active in obeying the summons.’ He left me almost directly, and took a house in Cheltenham, where he was remarked, as he appears to have been in this village, more from his disregard to dress than for the charity he bestowed with liberal hands — although with servants he was parsimonious in the extreme; his food was simple, and in those niggardly habits which he had practised in his youth, he very nearly starved his own nurse. Last Thursday I received a two penny-post note from him, dated Carmarthen Street, and desiring me to come instantly. I obeyed, and found my old client upon a bed from which I saw at once that he never would move without the undertaker’s men. The apothecary, who was of no practice, and who was

just clever enough to perceive that his patient was about to leave him, recommended calling in a physician; but Mr. Houghton strenuously objected to throwing away money upon so bad a subject as himself. I arrived in the middle of the argument; I instantly despatched a boy for Dr. Baillie, who fortunately was at home. Directly he visited the patient, he gave him a general release, as he saw he could not arrest the progress of the case;—in fact, it was evident that an action had been declared against him, and he had entered an appearance.”

“Not by attorney, Mr. Verity?”

“No, thank God! not just yet. However, he rallied a little, and sending every one out of the room but myself, he recapitulated the outline of Louisa’s fall owing to his son, and then gave a brief picture of your open pew and doors. He called upon me to be your guide as I had been his; and then giving me a hint that my fee would have been quite enough for the doctor, he directed me to have no fuss and nonsense about parading his carcass for a field-day, but to pop it into a long wooden case, and send it down by

the van to Longdale House, to be buried under a small mound which is in an open spot in the wood, not far from a small spring of water. I have conformed with all his wishes excepting the last, and I will consult you upon it to-morrow in our way to town. When he had done, he asked for some wine and water. We were obliged to send out for it, for he had not a drop in the house. Before it came he was much worse, and could not drink, I therefore wetted a rag, and squeezed it into his mouth, and continued this, as it appeared to give him some relief, until two in the morning, when the rattle of death announced the delivery of judgement. Before, however, the light was extinguished for ever, he sat upright in his bed, and with a kind of lightning before death, he glanced his eyes round the room, and saying, ‘Where is Harry?—where is my son, my poor forgiven son!’ he fell back and died. It was to me, who make money, and who spend it rather freely, a wonder that a man of his property could have contented himself with such a lodging—excepting that no one would have suspected him of being the man he was; and thus

he passed on without observation until his last moments ; the apothecary believing him to be almost a pauper ;—and the good old woman who nursed him was much of the same opinion ; he had hired her at ten shillings the month, and had paid a fortnight in advance. I believe the old female thought I wanted a nurse, when I gave her a ten-pound note for the trouble she had had, and the kind feeling she had manifested. Now, sir, as the time draws on, and we have sufficient to do for to-morrow, here is to your health and wealth : may you spend it honourably, and go down to your grave at a good old age, respected by the poor of Longdale House, which estate, besides the 70,000*l.* is yours, and left free of all encumbrances, or of settlements. He once thought of making you take his name ; but he considered that some of the slander which had been affixed to his son might by mistake be given to you, and thus hurt your prosperity. So now, sir, having broken the ice of our acquaintance, I shall betake myself to bed, and hope that to-morrow before ten we shall be quite ready to start for London.”

“Good night, Mr. Verity,” said Robert ; “you have been the only harbinger of good news I have ever had through my unfortunate existence. May you sleep soundly, having done your duty conscientiously and well. I shall not trouble the poppy god much, I feel, but I will not detain you.” And away went Verity, preceded by Mary, who had dressed herself out in her best, in order to show her participation in her master’s good fortune.

Now came reflection ; and as Douglass stretched himself out upon the bed which for two years had borne his weight, he began to sum up his day’s doings, as the old gentleman told him a famous English judge always did. He had never thought of Margaret, excepting in that sudden ebullition when in reality he thought of sharing his fortune with her. She had refused him as a pauper, she had discredited him, she had even laughed at him : now, he had the means of revenge ; but that was a mean cowardly spirit, and he did not entertain it a moment. But very different did he feel from being the humble man he had been. Margaret’s age, he found, was too

near his own—he had always considered twelve years as necessary; he knew by experience that a parity of age never conduces to happiness—he knew well the difference between a man and a woman at forty-five;—still, he liked the Ansons, and he began to harbour a slight affection for Julia, who was then only sixteen, and who promised to be as fine a woman as her sister, without being so much spoiled or so selfish. Then he wandered away to Paris and to Rome; and after a night through, in which he dozed but never slept, he was aroused by Mary at seven o'clock, and went through, for the last time for many years, the drudgery of being his own servant. He was down, dressed and ready, by eight o'clock. He presented Mary with ten pounds, by way of beginning; he gave instructions as to the house, and took good care to let his little tattling maid know his good fortune; then telling her that if when Mr. Verity was ready for breakfast he had not returned, she would find him somewhere about the Ansons' gate.

It happened that as he approached the gate he met a gang of strolling gipsies; and being accosted by a rather pretty girl of the tribe, who was

solicitous to tell his fortune, he stopped close to the cottage, and giving a shilling to have his palm crossed with the silver, the little black-eyed girl thus enacted prophet, after first asking him if he gave it with a good will and generous heart : “ Ah, sir,” she began, “ many’s the long mile you have travelled, and many’s the more you have got to go ;—it is not a journey you are going to take directly that I count, but miles and miles away, away. You have had many crosses and mis-haps, but now you are rich and happy ; but the day will come when you will remember the poor gipsy girl, when you will not be so wealthy as you shall be this day : it’s fortune that will ruin you. There’s many a fair one will seek to win you ; but the one you once loved, you will never marry ; and though she is not far off, yet your bride is nearer : it’s all as fixed as fate—the girl you would have married yesterday this day is not for you.” She finished, and walked on towards the village, leaving Douglass most superstitiously pondering over the truth of this guess-girl, when, giving a deep sigh and turning round, he saw Julia standing by the gate watching him. Rumours of wealth had gone before him, and as

he advanced to shake her little hand, Margaret asked him to come in and breakfast. He pleaded the presence of his solicitor, and scarcely heeded the congratulations of Mrs. Anson, whose head was now exhibited, and who seconded the invitation; but at that moment he saw Mary, and waving his hand as he offered to carry any parcel to town for them, he turned round, and was soon at home.

Robert began to think the gipsy was right on every point, for on many he knew her to be so. To be sure, he knew that every man who was not tied by the leg either to a counter or a shop-board must travel a good deal; and as for love, what would a gipsy girl's prophecy be without a spice of that? — every man must fall in love, or fancy himself to be so. In short, he turned it all over in his mind, and came to this conclusion: that if he was to be ruined after all, and know poverty and be acquainted with the poor, he might as well have some fun for his money; and as to his yesterday's love, he had already eased himself of that, or all the solicitors in the world would never have kept him from Margaret.

CHAPTER XII.

AT ten o'clock Mr. Verity and Douglass left the residence of the latter and proceeded to London. Robert felt a degree of pleasure unknown to him before when he observed several of his old maiden friends watching his departure : he waved a most patronizing bow, and he imagined how severely they must have regretted the trifling civility of opening a pew-door. It was resolved during the journey that the old benefactor should be buried in a decent manner, without any fuss or parade, in the spot he had selected : they broke down his directions in regard to the van by making a hearse into that conveyance. They had little time to make arrangements, for it was agreed that Mr. Verity should accompany Robert, preceding the corpse, to put him in possession, and likewise to arrange all the

preliminary necessities. Douglass took care to have a regular vault made, and ordered a most splendid monument—one not unlike that celebrated mark of affection planned by the present king over the late queen of Prussia.

In the mean time, the vanity of human nature began to embitter the moments of Robert's life. When he first saw Longdale, he saw a paradise. It was beautifully situated on a gentle rising ground ; the long, even shaved lawn finishing at the bank of a large lake of water : beyond this was a thick wood, which flanked the eastern side of the house, protecting it from the cold winds of that quarter ; whilst on the left was one of the most splendid views in the county of Kent. The house was spacious, but too elegantly furnished : Robert was afraid to move his own chairs for fear of spoiling their splendour. Every room was in excellent preservation ; and the old housekeeper who welcomed him to this godsend declared that ever since Mr. Houghton had visited it, which was six weeks previous to this day, she had, in obedience to his orders, been busily employed in preparing the house for its new master. This

estate comprised one thousand acres in a ring fence, and was advantageously farmed out, producing a very respectable income,—for at that time agricultural distress was not the cry of the whole nation. The fact was, the property had been so well managed between Mr. Verity and the housekeeper, that Robert thought he could not leave it in better hands, more especially as he had been a witness to the honesty and the attention of both. He took good care to *know* that every requisite for a family was in the house: he visited the cellars, and saw the *tenants at will* therein;—they were closely packed, and had very dignified titles appended to their habitations. He received the congratulations of the people who lived near him; but he was pleased—much pleased, when he heard that the family from which Harry Houghton had selected his wife had long since left the neighbourhood, as the very name of Longdale rang like the last curse of old Houghton in the ears of his dying daughter-in-law upon the good old father of that excellent family.

The day of the funeral arrived, and the hearse

made its dusty appearance. Robert saw the coffin of Benjamin Houghton placed in the vault; he heard the service of the dead in solemn accents read over him, he threw some dust himself upon his grave, and he became the full and only possessor of the soil—for he who owned it was become a part of it. He gave some directions as to rendering the monument, when it should be finished, an object worthy to meet the eye; and after sleeping that night at Longdale, accompanied Verity to town in order to settle his affairs before he began to put his schemes into operation. His first wish was to see Louisa Stanhope, now Louisa Walton. She attended at Verity's, in order to sign the release with her husband, and Robert could not but admire the regularity of her beauty: she was now only twenty-five, and a finer woman could not be seen in the metropolis. When Robert was first introduced to her, she led him aside from the desk and the parchments, and said, "You know my history, I am informed;" and the large tears filled her beautiful eyes. She was in deep mourning, and spoke in terms of the warmest gratitude of old Mr. Houghton, but

she never once alluded to Harry. Robert could not help inquiring for Cavendish, and learned that he had lately been engaged in some swindling transaction, and had left the country, having twice or thrice solicited charity from the very being he had so often endeavoured to render a common prostitute on the town. That excellent creature relieved him ; for although fallen in the estimation of Virtue, and justly fallen, yet we cannot but admire the fortitude of one who still maintained the dignity of her former station, and who did not allow the frowns of the world to render her heart callous to the call of mercy.

Amongst other acquaintances that he made, Charles Stanhope was one. He was a soldier by profession, — not from choice, but necessity : his other brothers had engrossed all the interest the father held in church preferment, and he had been driven to the sword for an occupation and employment. Charles was one of those very few men we sometimes meet who regulate every idea by the strict standard of honour : he carried it beyond what was requisite ; for if we are told we are not to “ be righteous

over-much" in religion, so we may say, "Be not honourable over-much in society. There are always one or two white lies which are absolutely necessary; but Charles would not tell a white lie to please either his colonel or his king. He was one who had profited by example, and often said that he considered the whole career of Harry to have been influenced by the falsehood he told his father when he promised not to see his wife for two years,—it was God's judgment for the untruth. To Charles Stanhope, who received a handsome legacy, Robert became much attached; and in order to let him see the rise of his fortune, Robert engaged him to visit him at his old abode in the village—to sit in the pew where the old gentleman sat, to sleep in his bed, and to share some of the good things he was now enabled to offer from the unexpected liberality of Mr. Houghton. In the mean time he made various purchases, and sent down some of the good things of this life. Mary circulated the report that Mr. Douglass was about to return; and the gossips of the village imagining from this circumstance that his good fortune had

been overrated, already began to term the fortune “a trifling legacy.”

At the cottage one of those little scenes so common in life occurred the morning Robert left the village. Julia, who though so young that passion could not inspire a feeling, yet felt a comfortable glow and an uncomfortable blush when she mentioned to the assembled family the whole predictions of the gipsy. Mrs. Anson checked her folly, and comforted Margaret, who only thought of uniting herself with a man of wealth, by the assurance that no gipsy tale could alter his love; that if the roots were in the heart, none of the yellow tribe—not even the Bohemian sovereign—could drive it out of the head; and knowing the natural coldness of Margaret, she began to work upon her avarice more than upon her feelings.

“Nonsense, Julia, my dear!” said Mrs. Anson. “Robert has already declared his passion for Margaret; and now that he has a sufficiency, all obstacles will be removed—his first wish will be to throw himself and his money at Margaret’s feet, and I advise her to pick both up. You know,

my dear Margaret, that discretion, *not* dislike, prompted your refusal."

"I dare say he would do as well as another, mamma; and I suppose we shall live in London. I really long to leave this wretched dull hole, and see something more of the world. Besides, you can all come and stay with us, excepting Julia, and she is too young to be *out* yet."

"I have got the gipsy's prophecy," said the little Julia, blushing; "and I shall go to town, you may rely upon it, Margaret: you cannot be jealous of my beauty or influence."

"A prophecy?" interrupted Margaret: "girls of sixteen had better think of their governess than of their future husbands. Why, you don't think that he would marry you?"

"If he asks me," replied the open-hearted Julia, "I shall have him; for he is a kind man, and never yet said a harsh word to me. But I wonder if he has gone to town, and if he will return?"

"They say that he has got 50,000*l.* from that old man who visited him three months since, and that he was not his father," continued Margaret; "so that he has not been sailing, as Mr.

Gammon the attorney said, under false colours—although he changed his very often when I taxed him with it. I really wish I had never run away when he made his declaration of love : but to think of marrying a man who had 150*l.* a year was too absurd, and to rust and rot in this miserable village was quite preposterous.”

“ I should not wonder,” replied Julia, “ if your cool manner does not cool him. He offered himself when he had nothing but himself to offer, and you refused him : now, if you accept him, it must be obvious even to a lover, that his money, and not the man, was the bait.”

“ Suppose, Julia,” replied Margaret, “ you mind your own business. I tell you it is quite indifferent to me whom I marry ; but now I am determined to have Robert, for I have no idea of younger sisters interfering in such concerns.”

“ Julia, my dear,” said Mrs. Anson, “ go to Miss Boreum and practise your piano. I wonder how the word love ever got into your head !”

“ Why, mamma, I had my fortune told by the gipsy : and she said she knew I was in love ; and

she described Robert so well, that I think I shall take compassion upon him, since Margaret only likes his money. But I won't quarrel with my pretty sister about him; and if he speaks to you first, you may have him, on conditions that I am to be one of the bridesmaids. So now we are agreed, give me a kiss, and I will go to my studies. I wonder when I shall have done with Miss Boreum and be *out*; for although I like her as much as a girl can like her governess, yet I confess I should rejoice to be independent."

"Do go, Julia!" said Mrs. Anson: "how your tongue does run riot!—one would think the gipsy girl had told you you were to find a fortune, and that she had been a true prophet."

"Oh, mamma, I remember what she said: I shall find a fortune and a husband too."

Robert had bought a carriage, one handsome and convenient; and in it he placed Charles and himself, whilst in the rumble the servant, a personage of much pretension both in looks and accomplishments, occupied his seat. He had only a pair of horses, but the equipage was one which would have created a sensation in any village.

“ I am now, Charles,” he said as they drove away from the hotel in London, “ about to make you a confidant in my history. I shall have the pleasure to-night to introduce you to one of the handsomest women in England, with whom I candidly confess I *was* much in love. It is now scarcely a month ago, and the day previous to Mr. Verity’s information of my good fortune, that I made her a proposition of marriage ; and she not only refused me, but refused me coldly : she actually laughed at me, and conveyed the ungracious negative with a want of feeling which shocked me,—nay, it was an implied scorn. I left the village the day after Verity’s visit, having spent the evening with the family, and from the mother heard a confirmation of the sentence declared against me. It was near midnight when Verity arrived and I became an affluent man. I shall have no secrets from you ; and I tell you that, in spite of all my good fortune, the contempt with which I was treated by this beautiful statue has made me dread to meet her. I know that on our arrival we shall be asked to dinner there,

and I want your advice as to the propriety of accepting it."

"Do you intend," asked Stanhope, "to resume your intimacy with the family, so as to leave them to suppose that you still harboured a love which her breath might send to sea?"

"Most certainly not," replied Robert: "my intention in this little excursion is to show you how and where I was living, to make you sit in the fortunate pew, to bid farewell to all my neighbours, and to express to Mrs. Anson my warmest thanks for her former hospitality."

"An honourable embassy, in which I shall be your secretary," said Charles; "and then—"

"Then my intention is to take a Continental tour with some such good fellow as yourself; or, if you feel inclined—for we have both seen France and Italy,—to steer across the Atlantic and visit Jonathan, I am your companion for as long as you can obtain leave of absence."

"That would suit my inclination and my desires well," replied Charles; "but you must not force me into extravagances or render me insignificant by your wealth."

“ I feel that to be impossible,” replied Douglass ; “ your *sterling* qualities are more valuable than my money ; but I promise to place my expenditure at the ratio you yourself shall fix, and thus then we agree to visit Jonathan in his own state.”

“ In one of them at any rate,” replied Stanhope. “ What place is this we are coming to ?—a man that could live here must be one tired of the world, and——”

“ Turn to the right, boy, at the Elephant and Dormouse, and stop at the first white house on the left-hand side. Come, drive us up sharply.”

Smack went the whip ; the wheels whisked round with increased velocity ; out of every window pop came a head to see the carriage. Douglass sat back with becoming retirement as the vehicle quickly passed the Elephant, turned to the right, and stopped opposite the door. An hostler from the inn ran to offer fresh horses ; and as Robert was rather the better in appearance for a London tailor’s decorations, when he stepped from the carriage, the lout exclaimed : “ Why here’s he be again, and as bright as a new penny !”

The carriage was sent to the inn, and Robert ushered Stanhope into his little parlour. "Here it was," he said, "that old Houghton told me his misfortunes: here's the humble table which was spread to welcome him, and in this little cabin did he feel more comfort than he had known for years." The London gentleman's valet turned up his nose at the small habitation, and gave Mary a look of contempt, as much as to say, "Country vermin!"

Douglass was right in his conjecture. Before he had time to give directions to Mary as to dinner, a note, written in Margaret's hand, was delivered to him. It forestalled him in every way, for it mentioned that they knew he had not ordered dinner, and that a companion accompanied him. Both were invited, and both accepted. The note began "My dear Robert," and she was very truly his even to the end.

Stanhope remarked the beginning and the end, and was about to make some objection to the acceptance, when Douglass told him he had always been called Robert, and had received dozens of notes in the same style. In the mean

time the church bells began making the most infernal noise ; the tradesmen, whom Douglass had punctually paid, came to announce their gratitude for former custom, and to solicit a continuation of the same ; and when he walked out, he was surrounded by candidates for service and for charity.

“ This is flattering, Robert, at any rate. You seem to have steered a steady course whilst you lived here ; and amongst the many who have bowed and congratulated you, not one has brought up one of those unpleasant reminiscences in the shape of a small account accidentally forgotten, and only presented as it might have escaped your memory.”

“ Thank God,” he replied, “ it is with some pride that I can lay my hand to my heart and declare that I never owed a farthing in my life. I had but little, and within that little I managed to live. But here is the cottage ; let us pay a visit before dinner : and I warn you, before you enter, to place a good barrier before your heart.”

“ Never fear,” said Charles ; “ the captain of a walking regiment has too many boots to buy,

to take a wife ; and besides, her eyes will be upon *you* ; where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. By Jove ! it is a comfortable place though, and fancifully decorated."

" Yes, and the inside has more beauties, and natural ones, than the exterior. Mrs. Anson, this is my friend Mr. Stanhope ; and we both intend ourselves the pleasure of dining here to-day."

Mrs. Anson bowed and was most happy. The door opened, and Margaret entered. A flush came over the face of Charles ; and as Douglass shook hands with her, and presented her to his friend as the flower of England, he thought he never saw Stanhope look so confoundedly foolish in his life. He stammered and stuttered something about beauty and justice, and made such a jumble of a hotchpotch, that Robert thought he should have laughed outright. Then Julia came running in with all the joy and the sincerity of youth, and taking Douglass's hand, said with a smile, " My congratulations, although last, are not the less sincere."

" You are rather in error there, my dear Julia," replied Robert, " for you are the first

to congratulate me ; and in return, I will present you to my best friend, Mr. Stanhope. Here, Charles," he said, "here is my little favourite"—a blush came over her cheek,—"as nice a young lady as heart ever warmed, and who intends to rival her sister's beauty."

"That's *impossible*," replied Charles ; but recollecting the bad compliment it was to Julia, he managed to bungle out of the unhappy speech by saying, "that although the promises were good, yet that no mother could be so blessed." Then came divers congratulations, many inquiries into the unexpected windfall. From Margaret, however, came this remark : "that she was glad to see Robert so prosperous, and flattered to find he still remembered his best friends at the cottage."

There could be no mistaking this : it was an evident signal that hostilities had ceased, and an amity had begun. But Robert knew not why it was, for Margaret was beautiful as ever, that he distrusted this apparently honest friendship. He had watched her behaviour, and had observed that although she made those false advances to him,

her real attack seemed diverted towards Stanhope. Her disposition to flirt and to conquer was too evident: she considered Robert as hers, and now she wished to entice Stanhope into her snares.

Any woman might have admired Stanhope: He was of a good height, rather a dark complexion, with brilliant eyes; his features being well formed—nay, handsome. He wore on his countenance the honesty, the integrity of his heart. He spoke, excepting when Margaret was the theme, like the straightforward soldier he was. To a good classical education he had added the accomplishments gained by travelling; and whilst he stood firmly as an English soldier, he could turn the lighter words of compliment, or fascinate by the melody of his voice. It was quite evident to any casual beholder that Stanhope was captured without firing a shot, and that Margaret only sought the prize in order to swell the list of her triumphs.

Their return to the humble home in order to make the necessary preparations for dinner was not interrupted by any lover-like fits or starts. Charles was silent, and apparently questioning

his own heart ; Robert kept his eye fixed upon him, and the only words which were spoken were by the latter, who asked “when Charles would be ready to sail to America?” Charles looked at the questioner, and could not refrain from a smile.

If poverty makes a man acquainted with strange bedfellows, unexpected riches bring many a nominal friend. Robert found on his table, although he had not arrived an hour, invitations from half the parish. Those who shunned him before were anxious for his acquaintance now. The carriage had been passed in review by half the community ; the servant had been bored to death by inquiries. He happened to mention the beauty of Longdale house, and he placed in the hands, or rather the mouths of his tormentors, a series of questions to which he was destined to answer. He was asked why his master came—when he returned—how much he had received—who left it;—in short, everything relative to him, past, present, or future, was seized by the dexterous ingenuity of the wondering women.

They were dressed and ready to start to the

cottage—when Stanhope, taking Douglass by the arm, said: “One word in confidence, Robert. Be candid with me: have you any serious intentions as regards Margaret. Tell me, I entreat you, the truth.”

“On my honour, Charles, I have not the least intention of resuming my former situation of her lover,” replied Douglass. “Her admirer, as far as her beauty goes, I am still; but I will pledge you my honour that I will never make *her* another proposition.”

“Then I am more easy,” replied Stanhope; “for I own to you that I feel myself led captive already: I never saw so splendid a jewel before.”

“Oh, oh!” said Douglass, “you will feel differently when we are in America.”

“To America I don’t go, Robert, until that girl is Margaret Stanhope, or I a lost man.”

“There’s many a lost man found in America,” replied Douglass with a smile.

At dinner they were placed according to their own desires. The mamma and the two daughters were separated by the clergyman and them-

selves. The reverend divine paid great attention to Mrs. Anson; Charles made a most vigorous assault upon Margaret; whilst Robert by soft endearment gradually sapped the breastworks of Julia's heart. Never were three men so placed exactly to their wishes, and perhaps never were three women more agreeable. They made no noisy chorus, no open-mouthed hullabaloo; but they spoke lowly in duets, or sighed in *solos*. After dinner, whilst the clergyman and Mrs. Anson were engaged at backgammon, Julia and Douglass tried chess, and Charles sung to the accompaniment of Margaret. It was Saturday night, and it was close upon Sunday morning before they reached home. Before they departed, they were engaged for the morrow.

“Well,” said Charles, as he drew his chair to the table and filled a glass of champaign, (for Douglass had taken care to have all good things sent down,) “my flint is fixed; I am, thank God, independent, and I do not leave this village until I know if I am to be married or not. As for the soldier's coat, that is none the worse for a woman's care; as for the musket——”

“You had better *discharge* that,” interrupted Robert, “or you may be sent off like a shot yourself. Margaret will never dangle after a walking captain; and you had better change your flint for a cap, or perhaps she will set hers for you.”

“That would discharge me more readily than her words,” replied Stanhope. “But tell me, Robert, your plain undisguised opinion of her: do not extenuate, or set aught down in malice.”

“My judgment, as Mr. Verity would say,” answered Douglass, “is summed up from my own notes. In the first place, all evidence is in favour of her beauty: we therefore give her the full benefit of that redeeming virtue. She is a cold beauty, a kind of Lot’s wife, not satisfied with her lot—without any of the *salt* of accomplishments, though, like *Peter*, a catcher of men.”

“A very pretty picture!” ejaculated Charles.

“Just so,” retorted Robert; “a very pretty picture, set in a very pretty frame. However, I am bound to say, she never, that I knew, painted herself.”

“The bell-ringers, sir,” said John, as he enter-

ed, "send their compliments, and hope you will be kind enough to remember them."

"Here, give them this guinea," said Douglass, "and tell them, I hope they will never ring the changes for me again, excepting when another *belle* goes nearer the altar than the steeple."

"Why, Robert, you are, notwithstanding your mourning, pretty gay this evening."

"I say, Charles, did you see me playing at chess?"

"I saw you moving the men," replied his companion.

"So I did, and I found a mate. Although it is scarcely a month since I proposed to Margaret, yet I gave Julia a hint, that we talked of knights and bishops in such a brisk running of words that we never came to a check."

"Poor little soul!" replied Stanhope; "only sixteen! Why, you must hire a nurse for her."

"All in good time, my dear fellow," replied Douglass, whose spirits were high enough without any artificial aid. "Don't be alarmed; we shall require them, I dare say. And now for an *exposé* on my part: I will marry Julia, or I'll —"

“Go to America,” said Charles; “and I will have Margaret, and be your brother.”

They warmed over this conversation; but the Sabbath had begun, and Robert remembered the lesson of *example* which old Houghton had given him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE is something beautifully solemn during the Sabbath in the country—it appears in reality a day of rest; and often may the labourer have stood on a rising ground near Mereworth, looking over the beauty of Yotes, and wondering at the stillness of heaven. The bell which summons to prayer threw its deep tone over the valley; but the cattle seemed hushed—the air was still, not a leaf moved, and nature itself was relaxed from its labours and resting on the seventh day. That day brings with it rest to the weary and repose to the active; it gives a stimulus to exertion; it makes the guilty afraid, and the good satisfied. And if that silence, that repose, is broken when the prayers of the Sabbath are over, and innocent recreation triumphs over idle inaction, is this wholesome restoration to be called

a sin, and should bigoted legislators rise to crush the harmless pastime? Away with such inconsistency—such tyranny! You will allow the labourer to smoke, to drink, to assemble together—you hold out a premium upon drunkenness, and you repress the very innocent amusement which would wean them from a villanous expenditure of their hard-earned wages, and rid them of the surest enemy to health and contentment known since the days of Noah.

Robert entered the church with a firm step, and a firmer resolution, to offer up his most sincere thanksgivings for his power to do good, and earnestly to implore the Divine assistance to employ his means for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. He felt shocked at the idle curiosity which prompted all his former acquaintances to watch his manner and to scan his companion. He led Stanhope to his pew; and if he had required an example to pray, that excellent man would have served him as a model: his was fervent prayer; his eyes never wandered even to her he most loved, but his responses were low and impressive. It occurred to Robert that he had

never seen a man more solemn in the house of prayer, or more cheerful and contented out of it. Mr. Maxwell preached; and no sooner was his text given, than Douglass was again the public gaze of the congregation: even Stanhope touched him with his knee, and Robert felt like a sinner about to receive a rebuke as the preacher the second time repeated the words of his text,—“For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain: he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.”

The discourse, ably written, eloquently preached, touched Douglass in the right place. Once Mr. Maxwell in plain words alluded to him, and implored him to turn the resources now in his power, not to idle dissipation, but to the relief of the indigent: he spoke of those “who gave to the poor, lending to the Lord,” and he warned him to lay up riches in heaven. It was not without a secret pang that Douglass listened with all attention to that excellent man’s advice; and when his book was closed, he most solemnly prayed to put his words into execution. As Stanhope left the church to make his bow and

join the Ansons, Douglass remained in his pew and baffled curiosity: for it was not until the clergyman had withdrawn to the vestry, that he rose, and, to the wonder of those who hunt after novelties, followed Mr. Maxwell to his retreat. The rector seemed rather astonished at his entrance; but when he took his hand and thanked him for his excellent advice, he saw a glow of satisfaction pass over his countenance.

“ I know,” said Robert, “ my dear sir, how vainly in this life we propose to act,—the disposition is above: but I am anxious to show you that I had partially forestalled your sermon. You know how slender have been my means of doing good, and you know that for four years I have resided near you, unable,—positively unable to contribute much towards the relief of the poor. That is now passed, and I hasten to avail myself of this first opportunity to contribute something to the alleviation of the distresses of my fellow-parishioners. Allow me to place this cheque in your hand, to be distributed in any manner and to whatever objects you may think deserving.—Good morning: we meet, I believe, at

six." And Robert was soon with the Ansons, who had awaited his coming.

"You don't want a second," said Charles with a smile on his countenance, "do you? Clergymen are privileged people, and we must avail ourselves of their advice without feeling hurt."

"Kindly considered, my dear Stanhope: perhaps I may want you to carry a message to him before long; but at present he and myself are on very good terms, I assure you."

Those little civilities which mark the charm of civilised life passed between them as they walked home; Stanhope keeping close to Margaret, who seemed to have fancied his society more than Robert believed the marble statue could have done, whilst he himself steadily fixed his attention upon Julia; and although Mrs. Anson did occasionally manœuvre so as to place them in other positions, yet they were mutually attracted, and a mother might have seen that their eyes met more frequently than those of casual and cold visitors.

It is said that love is a plant which grows di-

rectly from the heart, winding its roots round the centre of life, and endangering its existence when it is suddenly torn away. "It cannot come from the head," says Hood, in his "Tylney Hall;" but, with all due deference to that talented and witty author, some men hold him to be mistaken. Love is more generally grown in the head, and ultimately takes root in the heart. The gipsy's rubbish had first given the slip of this precious flower to Julia, and Robert soon transplanted it to a warmer region. In the mean time, Stanhope was gradually, as he thought, progressing: he had got to "shaking hands," "making eyes," and many other of the early resting-places of incipient affection.

They had been a week, and then a fortnight, and ultimately a month, residing in a village out of which Douglass would three months previous have paid half his little store to have got. He had rather gained ground from the trumpet-tongued praise of Mr. Maxwell, who extolled the liberality of his parochial donation, which was 200*l.*, into the munificent offering of a prince. It now became evident that both Stanhope and

Douglass were bound to make a declaration of their sentiments ; and as they talked over that important point, they came to the resolution of making their hand-offerings on the following day, each lecturing the other.

“ Depend upon it,” said Robert, “ you have mistaken Margaret. Had she heard that your sister had given you 20,000*l.* of her money, the case might be different ; but as she believes you not worth one straw beyond your pay, you will find that she is indifferent to your person, although proud of the conquest.”

“ And you, my dear Robert,” replied Charles, “ will find that Julia does not know the feeling of love. She is too young ; and notwithstanding your wealth, the mother will never consent to the sacrifice of her daughter’s health by allowing her to marry when only sixteen.”

“ There you are wrong, Charles, believe me,” replied Douglass ; “ for a mother seldom weighs all the may-be results of a match when 70,000*l.* and Longdale House are in the scale.”

“ I cannot have so poor an opinion,” retorted Charles. “ of human nature, as to believe that

any parent thinks of money when her daughter's health is concerned."

"Then, my dear fellow, you are in a happy state of ignorance as to match-making," replied Robert.

The morning came, and noon saw them at the cottage resolved to sell their freedoms. Robert felt certain of success, for he had watched the constant struggle between love and propriety; he had seen those little sparkling eyes constantly fixed upon him, and he knew quite enough of the world and of the innocence of Julia to know that her eyes only beamed with the true sentiments of her heart; but he confessed he had his misgivings as to the result of his friend's proposition, for he had been rejected there himself under similar circumstances, and Stanhope, who was willing to be loved only for himself, had bound Douglass to a strict promise not to betray his fortune. He himself never hinted one word about his money or his expectations, but kept a guarded silence in respect to both.

It was May, the latter end of it; all the flowers of the spring were in their glorious liveries, and

Nature was rejoicing in her beauty. The walks, shaded by occasional lilacs and laburnums, looked enticing for lovers who like solitude, and Douglass and Julia were soon seated on a rustic chair in a bower perfumed by the beautiful odour of the former flower. Robert held Julia's hand, and tenderly regarded her lovely face. There was an intense glow of languid feeling, and her eyes seemed swollen with unusual moisture: there were no tears, but the tremour of love had reached her heart. They sat with eyes fixed upon each other, and the tongues of both seemed debarred the power of utterance. At length Douglass said, as he gently pressed her hand,—

“My own, my dearest Julia! let me seize this moment to confess by words what you must have often seen and known by my manner.—Tell me, then, if the love I feel has found its echo in your heart. Nay, dearest Julia! do not weep, or turn away that flushed but charming face; tell me, my angel, if I am to be so blessed,—that in throwing myself and my fortune at your feet, I may venture to hope your love for me is equal to mine, and that days of happiness are yet in store for me.”

She did not answer, but there was an acquiescence in her silence—she did not withdraw her hand as Robert gently pressed it to his heart; and when a flood of tears had relieved her from her maiden coyness, she turned towards him, and in a voice scarcely audible, she returned the pressure of his hand and answered, “ Robert.”

’Twas done ;—Robert felt his love returned ; he knew her sincerity, there was nature in all her answers ; no forced blushes, no accidental tears, but the pure emanation from a heart now confessedly his.

There are moments of life worth preserving in ideal spirits, if to time we could give corporeal substance, and embalm it with the fragrance of oriental perfumes. These moments are few ; and perhaps, throughout the long catalogue of imaginary pleasures with which the gloom of boyhood and manhood is enlightened, none can shadow forth such enjoyment, such perfect unadulterated happiness, as where pure love is offered and welcomed. We speak not of the cold, creeping tremour of appetite ; we speak not

of the pride of heart, when beauty is subdued and passion satisfied ; but of that warm, generous feeling which would sacrifice life itself to the object it solicited. How long they enjoyed this rapture they knew not : the car of Time is said to move quickly over the verdant ground of pleasure, whilst pain lingers on the pace of the tortoise ; swiftly flew the chariot of enjoyment, and as they talked of happiness to come, and formed plans of future felicity, the hours flew, and already the lengthening shadows of evening announced the necessity of their return.

Robert urged Julia to make an instant appeal to her mother, for well he knew the danger of teaching dissimulation to a parent. Can the husband expect fidelity, when he himself gives the lesson of deceit to his wife ?—No. The man who sees in his partner the proper glow and affection of the daughter towards her parent, and that warmth of cordiality towards her sister, may fairly presume, that she who is a good daughter, a sincere sister, and a true friend, will in all human probability make a good wife. Julia was young, not seventeen, and these marks of filial

attachment rendered the prospect more brilliant. Robert desired her to relate exactly his feelings, which he would afterwards confirm : “ That although he was as great an admirer of Margaret’s beauty as ever, still that he could not insult her by fostering the love she had desired him no longer to nourish ; but that her beauty, Robert saw, was reflected in her sister’s face, and that her young heart had accepted the bird driven from the abode it once thought to occupy.”

Robert now quickly questioned Julia concerning the chance of success in regard to Stanhope, who, he knew, would take a refusal to heart more seriously than Robert had done, for he had a balm of consolation the very evening administered by that most excellent Mercury, Verity ; and although love is a very generous plant, money is no weed, and if any way related to the garden of Flora, it must be in the poppy, which occasions sweet slumbers and gives high spirits. Julia’s apprehensions first gave Robert a warning of what he might expect, she having repeated to him the scene relative to the conversation which we have

already mentioned. Again and again they exchanged their vows ; he kissed her animated cheek, and at five o'clock left her at her own house. Robert inquired for Stanhope—the servant told him he had returned home some time since ; he asked for Mrs. Anson—she was indisposed ; he ventured to name Margaret—she was dressing for dinner. He therefore took his leave, telling Julia that he would return in the evening, and with hasty strides reached the door.

We have described Stanhope before—at least his mind. He was a man who had less of the world's shuffles and cuts than any other human being we ever met with : he was as brave as a lion, and with women as timid and reserved as a midshipman. Robert found him seated by the table, his head resting on his arms ; and when he raised himself to meet him, his whole countenance betrayed the grief which he had so seriously experienced.

“ Now then, Charles,” said Robert, for he was in high spirits,—“ now then, my boy, as the sailors say, let's overhaul our log-books ; let's see

which has made best weather during the squalls. But you are looking sad enough: what's the matter, my boy?"

"I am eternally rendered miserable, Robert; I shall never be happy again."

"Then she has accepted you, Charles, and you repent already."

"No, no, indeed she has not, Robert; she has refused me nearly as coolly as she discarded you; and now hope is dead, for I never could bring myself to offer again."

"Take a glass of wine, Charles, and let's hear all about it: I can assist you, I can bring it all right,—but out with the story—let's hear it all," said Robert.

"Merely this, Robert:—When you went into the bower, I went into the fields. We strayed far away; and when I thought she could not run all the way home as she did with you, I at once opened upon the subject, breaking ground gradually, and advancing my parallels to the very ditch before the battery; and then I took her hand. I made no romantic speeches, but, like a soldier, and consequently like a man, I warmly

confessed my feelings, my admiration of herself and her beauty. She gave no sudden start, no tears swelled her eyes. I held her hand—it was motionless; I pressed it—she returned it not; and when in plain terms I told her of my love, she looked me unmoved in the face and smiled. I pressed her to consent to be mine; she replied—“She had never thought upon the subject; but that she *feared* she could not meet my wishes, as her mother had destined her for you.”

“Do you love *Robert*?” I said—“nay, be candid, my dearest Margaret,—do you love him?”

“No,” she drawlingly replied: “I like him well enough; but as to loving him, I don’t *think* I do.”

“You cannot conceive how I felt, I, with all my warmth of heart, to find myself so slighted after all my attention, after all my affection. And you, Robert?”

“Me!—but hang it, Charles, you have not done? Did you abandon the attack after skirmishing?—after you had opened the breach, did you not assault?”

“ Oh yes, assault after assault, but I never placed a footstep upon the battery ; I was repulsed, beaten back—and not by any *warm* engagement, I assure you. Now, I am miserable. I make a feeble effort at wit, as men just before execution have been known to jest ; but Robert, I am, I assure you, rendered unhappy for life. I love that woman warmly, fervently, and I cannot bear this cold, this unusual refusal—or rather, chilling apathy, for actual refusal she never condescended to give.”

“ Then live and hope, Charles,” replied Robert. “ Now, for myself, Julia is mine, and through her your success is sure. Come, cheer up ! After dinner I am going to the cottage to speak to Mrs. Anson. I expect some little surprise at my change of persons, and now I will wager any sum that no obstacles are thrown in the way,—for you I have a sure mode. But I do not see why you should not accompany me ; for although Margaret did not consent, she did not actually refuse. And as in love or friendship, which knows no cold medium, either you will be dancing up in the sky like a boy on a see-

saw, or you will be levelled with the dust, so let us fortify ourselves with the generous champagne, and at eight we will again move our columns to the attack.—Dinner, John.”

In vain Robert rallied Charles; he was as far below as Robert was above concert pitch, and consequently their sentiments kept but little harmony. Whilst Robert was buoyant with hope, and attributing to his own dear self what perhaps sisterly jealousy, envy, and money might have controlled, Charles still harped upon the same chord,—the cold, ungenerous manner of Margaret.

“I tell you what Charles,” said Robert, “Margaret is no flirt—she is too ingenuous for that; but she is naturally cold, and, I was going to say, heartless. Many—nay, all who have seen, have admired her; but mark my words, if she escapes *you*, she will be like the lonely apple offered to the guests after dinner at Echmiâdzan, which is smelt by all and tasted by none.”*

“Ah,” said Charles, with a smile which looked like the ghost of a laugh; “and if ever I marry,

* See Missionary Researches in Armenia.

I will take care, out of pure revenge, to follow up the manner of the present Chaldeans, and mash my bride's feet to a mummy, in order to hold the supremacy for ever after." *

" Well said, my boy ; and stamp more feeling in her feet than she has in her heart."

The evening came, and at eight o'clock Charles and Robert went to the cottage. They were admitted, but found only Mrs. Anson in the drawing-room. Robert advanced with all the confidence of a triumphant lover and a most dutiful son-in-law ; but he was rather checked than encouraged by the guarded manner of the mother, who certainly did not bid him to rush into her arms, and become the prop and support of her growing age. She received Charles with a more condescending coolness, and they all three kept looking at each other like so many strange cats in a garret. At length Robert began by inquiring for the young ladies, and soon saw in which quarter the wind set, by receiving for answer, that the child (meaning Julia) had gone to bed, it being a bad plan to keep such late hours, then

* See Missionary Researches in Armenia.

only nine o'clock, and that Margaret was not well;—in short, she said, “I fear Margaret walked too far to-day, for she appeared very much overcome when she returned.”

During this conversation, Mrs. Anson occasionally glanced a rather repulsive look at Charles, who soon twisted it into a kind of death-warrant, and, with the readiness of a woman, discovered he had left his handkerchief at home, and taking his hat, walked off, intending to await the return of Robert, or to return if Robert remained long enough to give hope a chance.

He had no sooner quitted the room, than Mrs. Anson saved playing any prelude or conjuring up an overture by breaking at once into the grand opera thus:—

“I am more surprised, Mr. Douglass, than I can express, at what has taken place to-day; and I really feel that I should not either do credit to my daughter's feelings or my own, if I lost a moment in assuring you, that however much I may feel gratified at this second choice you have made, by which you prepared me for the honour you would confer upon my family, yet

that I never could consent to Julia's marriage, at her tender age, to a man who has made the same avowal of affection to her elder sister. Neither can I hold out any hope to Mr. Stanhope, since the very reason that I formerly gave you, is applicable to himself. It is a duty a mother owes her daughters to see them if possible comfortably settled in life, and to guard them from insult. I shall not fail in the former, whatever I may have done in the latter."

"Really, Mrs. Anson," replied Robert, "I am at a loss how to comprehend you. Surely the declaration of affection is no insult, or the offer of a fortune a blow against being comfortably settled; but the course of affection and true love never yet ran without interruption, and I am fully prepared to meet with, and to overcome all obstacles, for my proposition is honourable, my love sincere."

"Indeed, Mr. Douglass!" replied Mrs. Anson; "and how do you suppose Margaret must feel, who of course expected you would resume your attentions to her, and not have chosen as a

rival her own sister, a very child, who would better become the nursery than the altar."

"It was," resumed Robert, "the idea that I had paid Miss Margaret the most marked attention, that I felt both my inclination and my honour prompt me to make the proposition I did. She laughed at me—she thus refused me; and you, my dear madam, added your approval of your daughter's conduct—you refused me. Why then should you have anticipated a renewal of that you yourself forbid? and how could I pay so bad a compliment to Margaret, as to offer myself again, when it would be evident that my wealth, not myself, would be accepted?"

"You should have been a solicitor, Mr. Douglass; and if you used your ingenuity, and your subtlety as well for your client as you have done for yourself, you would gain every cause."

"Then, madam," replied Douglass, "I may hope that my defence will gain my present *suit*?" Mrs. Anson shook her head. "You say no; but I trust you will not object to listen to my explanation already given, and the evident insult

I should offer to my friend and myself, if I were—for which I am not the least inclined—to shift my ground, and, as the hunters say, try back again. No, Mrs. Anson; from the moment I received the cold refusal of Margaret, when she, as well as yourself suspected me of falsehood in regard to Mr. Houghton, and when you kindly—I must say most kindly, desired me to abandon all pursuit, I did so; I obeyed your orders to the very letter,—I struck her out from my heart; I allowed her no longer to occupy a thought, and I felt rising within me an attachment for Julia; I nourished it,—it grew, it blossomed; it was offered and accepted—my hand and my fortune are hers. The folly of calling a woman of seventeen a child—an infant, is too glaring, and I know you only did it in order to give me time to make this explanation. No power on earth could ever draw me back to Margaret: my love is Julia's, and to her, whatever may be *your* present intention, *I intend* to devote myself——”

“And Margaret?” interrupted Mrs. Anson.

“—Will not feel the slightest emotion of bruised affection, since that could not have grown since

my return ; for I have cautiously devoted myself to Julia. I hope she explained to you the nature of our conversation—in fact, the offer of my hand, and her acceptance ?”

“She has,” replied Mrs. Anson, “and I chid her for her folly ; but I see—” and here Mrs. Anson took me by the hand and continued smiling — “the gipsy *will* be right, and I need not oppose.”

“Then that is settled, and I am to be your son,” replied Douglass ; “and here I offer my first duty to my parent.” And as he kissed her face, he heard the door open ; and before he had unwound his affectionate arms, the Rev. Mr. Marshall was there, gaping like an alligator catching flies.

“Ah, that indeed,” he began, “I did not expect, or I would not have interrupted such *amiable weakness* ;” and he glanced a look at Mrs. Anson which called up her blushes and recalled her youth and beauty.

“It shall be no secret to you, Mr. Marshall——”

“Oh, none at all,” said the clergyman, “for I saw it.”

“No, no !——”

“Ah, but I say, yes, yes ! and, as the chancellor said, *I say, yes.*”

“Nonsense ! Mr. Marshall.”

“So I think, madam.”

“I tell you, he only gave me that kiss——”

“I ’m not so sure of that, madam.”

“——As an offering——”

“No doubt of it.”

“——Which any man in his situation——”

“Most certainly.”

“——Had a right to do.”

“Indeed !”

“Yes, indeed ! for he is to be my son-in-law.”

Mr. Marshall’s face puckered up to its usual goodness, and taking Douglass by the hand, said, “I congratulate you on your choice, and Margaret on her good fortune.”

Before they could clear up the mystery, Margaret entered, followed by Charles. “I congratulate you, my dear Margaret, with all my heart and soul,” said this worthy rector : “you could not have made a more excellent choice, or have chosen

one who, to judge both from his liberality and his candour, is likely to make you a good and an affectionate husband." (Mrs. Anson had been pulling away at the reverend's coat-tail during the whole of this.) "Your mother wanted to tell you herself; but I am before her in the good work, and I congratulate you both, only requesting that I may finish what I have begun." So saying, he turned round, and without regarding who it was, for he had not seen Stanhope enter, he took his hand and placed it in Margaret's.

"There," said he, as he turned round to Mrs. Anson, "I have done it here, and will do it at church: I have joined their hands, and made them one by promise. I hardly know how, Mr. Douglass, to thank *you*," (he said this so marked that it confirmed Charles that no mistake could be made,) "for your princely munificence; and when *you* marry, many a heart will rejoice and be made merry."

Mrs. Anson, when the rector turned to Douglass, in order to avoid the *éclaircissement*, left the room; and both Margaret and Charles were fully convinced that a change had come over the

spirit of the walk ; Charles believing that Robert had effected it ; and Margaret, giving way to her mother's choice, for she had none of her own, blushed slightly, and sat down near the piano.

Robert was quite aware of the consequence of the discovery ; and as the only method of rendering it less painful to Charles, he proposed to withdraw and return home. But Stanhope was in no mood to accept the offer : he, on the contrary, drew his chair close to Margaret's, and began some of those gentle, soft speeches to Margaret, whose hand he took, and which was not withdrawn. We are quite aware that our description of this lady may appear a little out of nature ; but, as Byron says, " truth is much stranger than fiction." So in this case it is evident : Margaret lives at this moment apparently the gayest of the gay, and certainly one of the loveliest of creation.

" That is all as it should be, Mr. Douglass," said the rector : " ' love me, love my dog.' I see Margaret admires your handsome friend ; and you have such confidence in her, that you are not jealous."

“Not I, sir, I assure you,” was the reply. “Charles may love Margaret as much as he likes, Margaret may return the compliment, without causing any jealousy in my breast; but, sir, one word;” and taking the rector into a corner, he whispered to him the whole state of the case, and urged him to support Charles’s cause. “He is,” Robert continued, “a most excellent man, although rather deficient in that which is by worldly people more considered than talent, temper, or merit.”

“Then, sir, *you* are to marry Julia, after having proposed to Margaret?”

“Just so; and here she is, blushing and looking ashamed to meet the man who is to unite us. My own, my beautiful Julia! this is kind, after your fatigue, to solace me by your presence. Come and explain our mutual histories to Mr. Marshall, whilst I have Charles brought to book by Mrs. Anson, for I vow that match shall not go off for a few pounds.”

“You have drawn a prize, Julia,” said Mr. Marshall, “and let me counsel you how to keep him firmly, unalterably yours. This is a match I shall be proud to join; for if the temper of the

woman and the character of the man would warrant a prophecy of felicity, my little Julia and my generous Robert are the most likely people to find it."

"Indeed, sir," said Mrs. Anson as she addressed Charles, "I cannot give my consent to this hasty marriage. You say Margaret *has* consented: if so, it must be under the mistake occasioned by Mr. Marshall. But in saying that I do not, cannot consent, understand me as conveying no slight upon yourself or your family. A parent's duty is her daughter's welfare; and certainly that would not be much enhanced by an alliance with one of your slender fortune. I do not say this as a rebuke, but as a duty, Mr. Stanhope."

"May I ask," said Charles with a look of some earnestness, "what Mrs. Anson would consider a sufficient fortune to be possessed by him who in return is to possess such a treasure?"

"I am not usúrious in my demands," replied Mrs. Anson, "but I never will consent to Margaret's marriage without the man of her choice

and *mine* can settle at least 10,000*l.* Then I should feel convinced that nothing short of a national bankruptcy could reduce them to actual poverty."

"Your objection then, madam, is to be overcome if I could settle 10,000*l.*?" said Charles, as he fixed his eyes full upon those of Mrs. Anson.

"Certainly," was her reply: "and if you could settle that, or even 8,000*l.*, so much do I esteem you and admire your character, that I would instantly join your hands."

"Then, madam, allow me to say, that I here pledge myself to settle 15,000*l.*; and I call Robert in to stand my security. He knows me incapable of a falsehood, and he will hear with pleasure, that my sister, on her being placed in possession of her fortune, did, with her husband's consent, present me with 20,000*l.* This I was resolved to keep a secret, to be beloved for my own, and not for my money's sake. So Margaret is mine, and we are to have a double wedding."

Robert was called, and stood security for

Charles,—indeed, he had made his mind up to have advanced a few thousands rather than this match should have been off; the rector stood witness to the agreement; and thus the lowering clouds of the evening were all dispelled. Charles ran to his beloved Margaret, whose cold manner would have converted another to an icicle; but Charles believed it “prudent restraint,” “maiden modesty,” and half a score of other fine expressions and sentiments, which any but a lover might have seen and have known to be false.

O that the blessing of Marshall had been sanctified and made holy! At that moment no mortals had fairer views of terrestrial enjoyment; no one would have prayed for a prospect more brilliant than that of Douglass. But the clearest morn may by noon be overcast; and before the clouds of night close over the grave of day, the torrent may have fallen,—the tempest may have burst.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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